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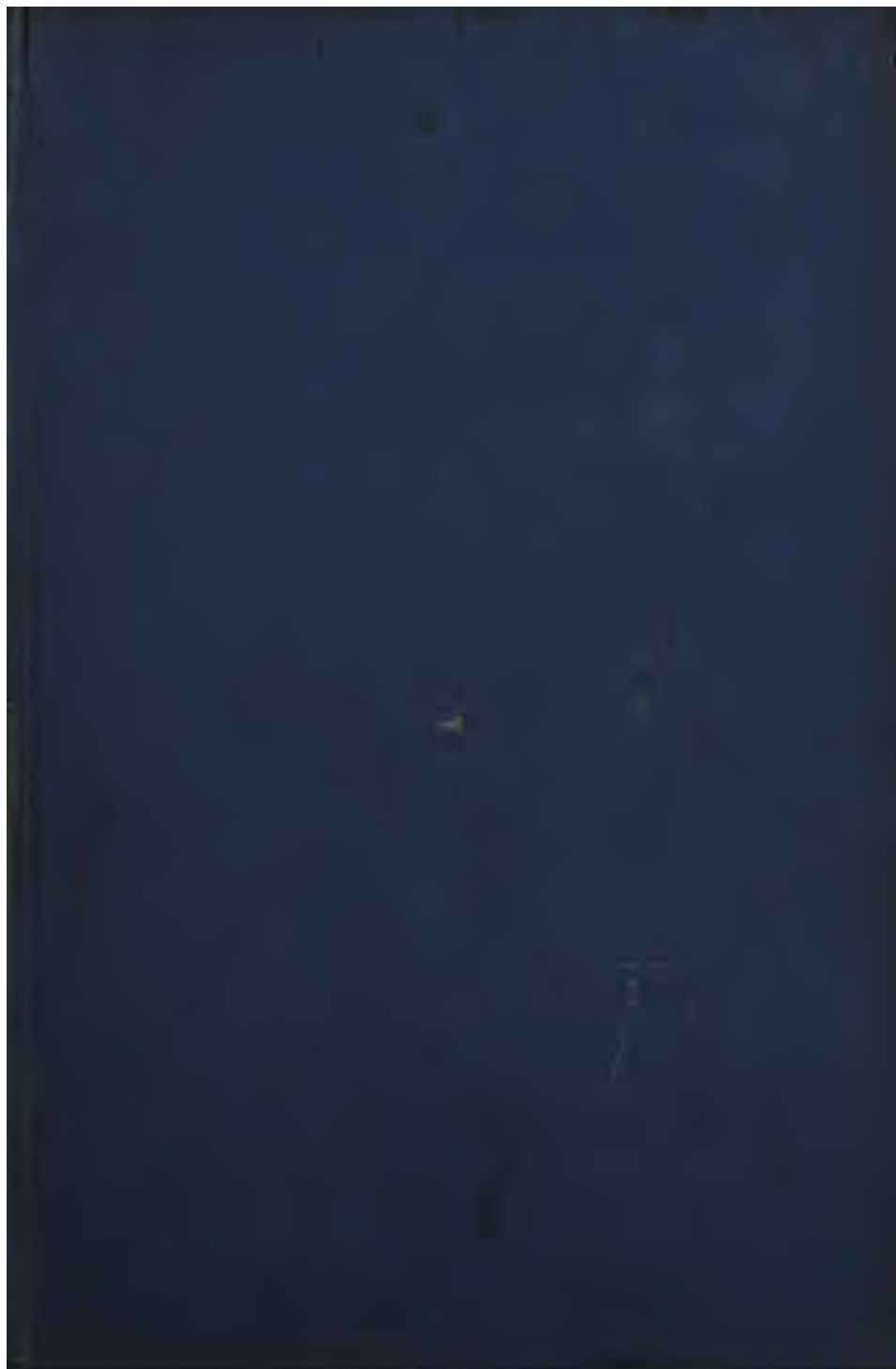
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HACO THE DREAMER

HACO THE DREAMER

A Tale of Scotch University Life

BY

WILLIAM SIME

AUTHOR OF 'KING CAPITAL,' 'TO AND FRO,' 'THE RED ROUTE,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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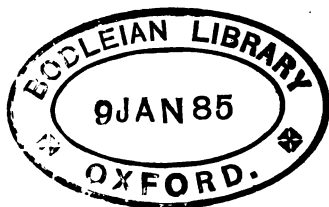
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HACO THE DREAMER



CHAPTER I

HACO AND HIS FATHER

‘HACO,’ said Sir Thomas Spens, one afternoon in autumn, as he looked from the open window of his dining-room at Binkie Manor upon the broad expanse of the Firth of Forth, which stretched from the rocks at the foot of his garden in Fifeshire to the further shores of Mid-Lothian. ‘Haco, you must make up your mind, one of these days, what you are to be. You are done with school;

you have to prepare for life. Your eighteenth birthday will occur this winter. Have you no tastes or predilections? Don't you want to be something, eh?'

Sir Thomas put the question with a brusqueness which woke up the lad addressed as Haco to the reality of his father's presence. Father and son were as little like as they could well be. The former was short of stature, with a massive head of wavy white hair, prominent, piercing grey eyes, a contorted mouth, and arms which seemed out of all proportion to his body. The latter was tall, slender, with a willowy poise of the shoulders; he had, at this period, rather a girlish face, in which the clearness of the blue eyes was apt to attract a special attention, while the rippling of his yellow, uncut hair over his neck distinguished him from others of the same age. At Dreghorn School, where he had spent the better part of four years, he was variously regarded as a 'muff' and

a 'duffer' because he wore his hair in that way ; but it was his father who ordered him not to cut it, because his mother, before she died, had liked to see him with the distinction of long locks. It was beginning to strike Sir Thomas Spens, however, that his boy being outwardly so unlike other boys, might bring on himself the fate of the unfortunate chicken that is pecked out of the farmyard for some dissimilarity of comb and feathers.

'Eh?' he repeated, turning from the window to look at his son, who was lounging dreamily in an arm-chair. 'You will be eighteen this winter, and it's about time you were making up your mind. Have you no tastes, I ask you?'

'Yes, father, I have tastes, plenty of them. I like hunting among the strawberry beds. I care to take a peach off the south dyke, and with the wasps darting at it, to digest it by myself in the sunshine. I like to open the gate in the

sea-wall and go down on the rocks, when the tide is out, and gather dulse. I enjoy stripping, with my boat at anchor, and swimming in the deep sea. I like lying on my back among the shingle, when the sun has gone down, and looking up at the stars.'

'Poor boy! poor boy!' said Sir Thomas, 'these are tastes which don't point to anything in particular, if, indeed they don't point to you being a born loafer. Now have you no other sort? Don't you feel, for example, that the time might come when you would want to stand in a law court, with a wig on your head and a gown on your back, making your voice sound all over the place, while a box of jurymen twist their necks to hear you—eh? eh?'

Haco only yawned and stirred in his chair.

'No lawyer!' murmured Sir Thomas, bursting out again, after he had taken a long look across the Firth to the heights of Edinburgh, where a

mist of smoke lay clustered. 'Why, man, at your age I had been to Greenland in a whaler, and removed a limb, and set three collar-bones. I knew something of surgery at eighteen, and I knew very well what I would be at, anyhow, and I had other things in my head than strawberries and peaches. I should think, from your letters, now, from Dreghorn, Haco, that you might have a turn for theology. Great prizes in theology now-a-days; carries a man far up. What d'ye say, Haco, to a pulpit—eh? eh? Large field for selection. What Church would you belong to? The one your mother belonged to, I suppose—or any Church you like. They're all the same now-a-days. Great prizes in them all. Do you fancy preaching?'

'No, father; I shan't go into the Church, and I shan't go to the bar. I was looking all through your museum, yesterday, at the top of the house'

‘You were! And what business had you looking into my museum? I declare the inquisitiveness of a youth is only equalled by his silliness. By his silliness, sir! I say it deliberately,’ said the father, who spoke with extreme vehemence and rapidity.

‘And,’ resumed Haco, in a voice subdued by the fire of the paternal language, ‘I should like to be a surgeon like you, father.’

Sir Thomas had spent his life in hospitals. He was, perhaps, the leading oculist of his time, as long as he practised from Wimpole Street, London. He had extracted beams and motes from thousands of eyes—from eyes illustrious over the world for what they could see; the eyes of statesmen, pained by midnight labours; the eyes of soldiers, blinded by smoke and fire in the breach; the eyes of tragedians who had heated them by nightly strains, and of comedians who had winked them out of shape; blue eyes, black eyes, grey eyes,

green eyes, brown eyes, red eyes—eyes of every tinge and hue, Sir Thomas had looked into and healed.

There was just the least glitter in his own eyes, as he realized that his son was proposing to follow in his footsteps. It had been the dream of his life that he should do so. His wrath abated at once as he looked on the slender figure on the chair, and there was triumph in every lineament of his face as he murmured, 'He has inherited the taste.'

'You would like to be a surgeon!' he said. 'I am pleased to hear you say so. Come here, lad, and look across the Firth. Look up the slope to Arthur's Seat. Yes; nothing the matter with *your* eyes. That's Edinburgh. Now, Haco, though my windows command a view of Edinburgh, and though any fine afternoon you may, if you like, go up on the other side to the Castle walls, and from the Mons Meg corner see the old place when you are home-sick, you must bear it in mind that,

practically, it is as distant as London for you. If you are determined to be a surgeon, you must accept the conditions of study and go through your course as other young men do. Let me see: you are eighteen this winter. Four years will take you through it. You will write M.B. after your name when you are twenty-two. A fine thing that will be, for I have no M.B. myself—only a double qualification, my boy, though it is backed by baronetcy, later on, to be sure. Still, you will have an advantage, with your M.B. standing, which I, your father, didn't have at your age. Haco, let me see your hands. No, they are not mine; they taper, and have more nerve than sinew in them. Your mother's hands, sir. Well, they may do better things than I have done. Follow your taste, I say, and if it leads you to Wimpole Street (from which I have retired these half-dozen years, for the purpose of investigating the physiology of the eye in my own laboratory,

on my own estate), then I say that's fate, and we must accept it. But you will please to remember, Haco, that it is Edinburgh you are going to, and not Cambridge.'

'Of course it isn't Cambridge, father,' said Haco, twisting a cameo on the little finger of his left hand. 'I see it before me—Edinburgh and its cloud of smoke; Arthur's Seat presiding over it, the Castle protecting it, Calton Hill supporting it. I don't confound it with Cambridge.'

'Eh? eh?' said Sir Thomas, who bore interruption badly. 'If you will only wait a minute, I will explain the difference to you. You go over there to fight your way and to learn the art of life for yourself. You don't understand what I mean? Well, that's very likely; but what I do mean is that over there, instead of going inside a fine architectural pile, with common rooms, and combination rooms, and cooks of renown, and dons to drill you, and proctors to protect you, you

must find out rooms for yourself, you must pick your own associates, you must make your own hours for recreation and study; you must cross the line, in fact, from youth to manhood, with your own staff in your hand. Well, you are close upon eighteen, and you want to be a surgeon. Why not? But over there, my boy, you will have few of the things you are used to in this house. For, if I allow you six pounds a week to find your board and lodging with, I allow you what it is probable that half-a-dozen other men in the University don't have. That, however, you will have—six pounds a week; and your fees and books and clothes I shall pay over and above. But you can't have home attendance on that. The University opens about the beginning of November. Let me see, you have still a month. There is a preliminary examination, to be sure, which you must pass, to test your knowledge of addition and Latin roots. After Dreghorn, you can have no

difficulty with it. You will pass it, and take chemistry and anatomy for your winter classes. Next season you will join the botany and zoology classes; but in the meantime you must go to a hospital every day. Take a dressership—— Eh? eh? Too soon? What the deuce do you know about it? You will take a dressership in Dr Crum's ward at once. Crum is a friend of mine. He has introduced all my operations—all that he can perform, at least—and is, on the whole, the only man who practically understands the eye in Edinburgh. His colleagues are as ignorant as beasts on the subject, as you will very likely find out from my controversial writings, when you come that length. And about my museum up stairs, you can see that for yourself. After your first session, I will have finished my series of experiments on moles, and, after studying the bones, you will be in a condition to understand them. Very good. We will meet at dinner, if you please.'

From school to college, from the restraint of Dreghorn, with its numerous dormitories and its *régime* of tall hats and regulation hours, to manhood and rooms and hours of his own! Haco felt a delirious rush of satisfaction, as he sped through an open conservatory and escaped, at a bound, down some steps of rockery to the shell-strewn walks and the broad green lawn at the foot of the garden wall. He let himself out upon the rocks, and was presently standing at the edge of an inlet, and on the beach a lad was sawing a plank at the side of a yacht. Haco bounded across the shingle, and, seizing the sawing arm of the lad, arrested his action, and demanded his instantaneous sympathy.

‘Sandy, d’ye know what I’m going to be?’ he asked.

Sandy stood for a moment looking at his questioner. He was a short, muscular lad, with a broad chest, plain features, and a massive nose.

When he took off his cap to rub the top of his head, he discovered a broad brow and a pair of twinkling eyes.

‘The laird, I’ll warrant, when the time comes, said Sandy, ‘an’ the laird’s son just now. Ye’ll be going to be a great yachtsman, like the rest o’ them, an’ a good shot, an’ a salmon fisher, an’ live for your pleasure. I’m just sawin’ a plank for the cabin locker.’

Sandy put his hand on his saw again, and was re-commencing his work, when Haco interrupted him with a shout of—

‘A surgeon, Sandy, like father; and I’m off to Edinburgh one of these days to commence studying. I am my own master now, and shall have rooms and an income of my own. Take off your cap, Sandy, and give me three cheers!’

Sandy was only a month older than Haco; but there was a deep seriousness about the expression of his face, which might have been more appropri-

ately worn by one greatly his senior in years. He took off his cap, however, and said,

‘Three cheers, then. An’ will there be nobody to look after ye?’

‘Do you call these cheers, man? They’re groans. Take care of *me*! A man doesn’t want to be taken care of who enters the University. I shall take care of myself. When you go up to Binkie Mains, tell your father and Tibbie and your mother about it. I won’t want to sail much this year, but you can finish that job on the locker.’

Sandy Baxter’s father lived away from the shore half-a-mile, in a farmyard which supplied Binkie Manor with all its country produce, sending the rest to various county towns, as they might want it. He was ‘the griever’ of the farm, and his son had, during the holidays, been much of a humble companion for Haco. He yachted with him in his little sloop; he swam with him; he assisted in

innumerable little projects of amusement on sea and shore, and the pair had a mutual esteem for each other, amounting in Sandy's case to affection, and in Haco's to affectionate patronage.

When the latter went home over the rocks, Sandy sawed his plank, climbed into the beached yacht, and fitted it to the locker. Then he ascended the lime tree walk and reached his father's cottage, as the fowls were being driven into their houses for the evening, and the cows were lowing at the gate.

'Father,' said Sandy, 'Mr Haco's goin' to Edinburgh this year to be a doctor.'

'The Lord preserve him!' said Mrs Baxter, who overheard the remark from her open door, at which she now showed her plain, sensible face, while Tibbie, adorned at the throat with blue ribbons, appeared in the background, exclaiming:

'Never, now, Sandy, you're jokin'.'

‘Father,’ said Sandy, ‘I’m away to Auld Reekie when November comes in;’ and he followed the griever into his stables, while the mother and sister set up a little chorus of ejaculations.

CHAPTER II

SANDY AND THE GRIEVE

THE griever and his son walked round the steading in silence, from stable to barn, and through a gate among the corn ricks to a field behind, where half-a-dozen foals, as yet ignorant of the yoke, were scampering at large.

‘Weel, man,’ said the father, a broad-shouldered, serious man, laying a foot upon the lower rung of a gate, and casting an eye over the fields to the Firth beyond it. ‘Weel, man, what’s this ye’ve gotten in your head?’

‘Just that I want to begin and look about me. If Mr Haco’s fit to begin yonder, so am I.’

‘Ay, man. And the pleugh’s no good enough fur ye! Ye think what fitted me ’ll no fit you. Whaur did ye get ye’r guid conceit o’ yoursel’? It was my intention to set ye up wi’ a pair o’ horse this winter. Ye could mak’ a sure leevin’ o’ that; and yon toon’s a wee uncanny for a lad frae the country. Gang to “Auld Reekie,” and, maybe, starve; stay at Binkie Mains, an’ ye’ll hae your bread an’ cheese, anyway.’

‘It takes a long time to be a grieve,’ said Sandy.

‘To be sure it does,’ replied the father. ‘It’s a responsible position. Look round about ye to what I have to attend to—sheep on the hill, cattle in the park, the foxes to feed at the earths, the neeps, the corn, the potatoes, and Sir Thomas Spens walking about there, allowing no man to interfere with a mole. He sets mair store by his moles than he does by his horses. It’s no easy

thing to be a grieve; and it's a position you have to work for—year in and year out—patiently and soberly.'

'Father, I want to go to the college.'

If Sandy had lifted his hand and struck off his father's hat, he could not have astonished him more than he did by his announcement.

'You want to go to the *college*?' repeated the grieve, taking his foot off the gate and retiring a pace to gaze upon this audacious son of his. 'Ay, man,' he went on, having satisfied himself that the youth was serious, 'this is what it comes tae, when the laird's son takes a fancy tae the son o' his grieve. I thocht ye had mair sense, Sandy, and kent your poseetion better. D'ye think, now because Mr Haco can gang ower yonder, and be a scholar and a gentleman a' his days, that you, without so much as a bawbee to your pootch, can venture to imitate him?'

'I'm not seeking to imitate him; but Dominie

Dunn says, "Sandy, go to college. A lad o' your mettle can always make your way, and in Edinburgh you'll make it well. I'll give you a line to one or two o' my friends, and you can keep your self at teaching until you have your degree in your trunk. A degree's a two-edged sword, Sandy," he said, "you can fight your way with it in any country or clime. People must quarrel and die and think about their hinder end, and as long as they do all these, they will need lawyers, doctors, and ministers." That's what the dominie said, and you remember that I've taken all his best prizes, and that I know enough to teach something to others.'

'Ay, man,' again observed the grieve, with less of surprise and scepticism in his tone, as he strode across the fields toward his well-thatched ricks and the farmyard. His son kept pace with him, and said no more till they entered the one-storey house. It was a sufficiently small cottage, containing three

rooms; a ladder from the kitchen, which was also the dining-room, led up to a 'loft,' in which Sandy had slept since he first abandoned his cradle.

The grievé sat down to his supper, a wholesome meal of eggs, bannocks, and milk, with his wife and family, but did not, at first, recur to the subject of the conversation in the field. Having swallowed his meal, however, he pushed back his chair, and said,

'Sandy, ye'd better tell your mother what you told me just now.'

The mother looked knowingly at the son; Tibbie looked encouragingly at the father; and the father perceived at a glance that it was not the first time the subject had been aired in his house.

'Mother,' said Sandy, 'I'm going to college.'

'Ay, man,' interpolated the father, 'you're a step further on this time. It was, last time, "I want,"

it's this time, "I'm going." There's enough o' conceit in ye, man, for ten.'

Mrs Baxter, swelling with pride in her only son and sympathising with his ambition, and believing in it, answered for him.

'Sandy's right. Will you just look round about you, Alexander Baxter, and tell me what better right the parish minister of Muchterauchtie had to his college education than Sandy will have? Didn't his mother and my mother bind "stooks" in the same field? And will you tell me what the writer of "Vennel" was?—a bare-footed laddie running about the High Street. And who's Doctor Philp, who rides half over the county?'

'Oh, I see,' said the father, 'it's you that's at the bottom o' it. Ye want braidclaith for him where I had moleskin. Ye want him to have white hands and to be a very fine gentleman. But it was only yesterday was a week that Sir Thomas said to me, "Baxter, you're right; send your son to the

plough. Let him improve his mind after hours, if he likes; have at manual labour in the first place. These are times, Baxter," said Sir Thomas, "when great opportunities are open to a man who understands practical agriculture. The colonies have all to be ploughed yet. Think o' that." And for practical sagacity and foresight, commend me to Sir Thomas Spens.'

'But he's made up his mind, father,' said Tibbie, 'he's going to college, and you must let him.'

'I've never been asked to give him leave; but since you're so clever among you, and have settled that to college he goes, ye'll maybe let me know how it's going to be done?'

'Ten pounds will pay all the fees. Eight shillings a week will pay all the expense of lodging. Dominie Dunn did it on less.'

'And what is't you're going to be? You've never condescended so far as to mention.'

'A surgeon.'

'Upon my word,' said the grieve, reaching to the mantelpiece and bringing down his pipe, 'you'd better say at once you want to be Sir Thomas Spens. You'd be for being upsides wi' the son too, in the same class with him, and the same company. Od's sake, I do *not* know what the world's comin' to.'

'No,' said Sandy; 'I wouldn't have the same companions, and I wouldn't be at the same classes with Mr Haco. The college is a word we use' —

'We use!' repeated the grieve, with an accent of sarcasm.

'For all the extra-mural schools as well as the University.'

'Extra what?'

'Extra-mural—over the wall schools.'

'And you'd be an over-the-wall scholar? Man, I wouldn't be that, if I was you.'

'You don't understand, father.'

'No, maybe not. With a fine, smart chap like

you for a son, I'm likely to be dull enough. It's no much in my line to understand about colleges.'

'You see father it's like this: I go to an extra-mural school; it's cheaper, and they say the same kind of teaching. I get my qualifications, like Sir Thomas, and if I like to go to London and pass for an M.B. in the London University, at the end of my course, I can do it.'

The grievance fell into a long reverie, from which it was impossible for the son to rouse him. He went outside with an appearance of attending to something, but it was only to pass out on the high road smoking.

There was a little pride and satisfaction mixed up with his reflections—pride in his son's pluck, satisfaction with the prospect of a broadcloth career for one he had designed for the fields. But then the scheme might fail. His son might not be able to work his own way so independently as he supposed. That unknown city across the

water from Binkie whose lights he could see shining in the darkness—what might it not contain of failure and misfortune for his only boy?

On the road he met the parish minister of Binkie returning to his house.

‘You’re late up,’ said the minister, who knew it was the habit of the grieve’s household to be in bed at sundown.

‘Weel, minister, I am late. I’m ruminatin’ about an important matter anent my son, Sandy. Sandy has made up his mind to leave us, and to start on his own account ower there. He would be a surgeon, he says; an’ I have neither ways nor means to mak’ him a surgeon.’

‘Sandy’s clever,’ said the minister, ‘and steady, I would have no fears of him anywhere. You should let a lad of that sort take his own course.’

‘It’s what I fear I will have to do, any way.’

‘Then don’t ruminate uselessly about it. Mr

Dunn has been talking to me about the boy, and he has great hopes of him succeeding. Lads like Sandy are the backbone of the student class of the city. Good-night, Mr Baxter.'

'Good-night, sir.'

The grievance returned to the steading in a less uneasy frame of mind. After all, the way might open up for Sandy, though he didn't see how. He would go in and hear what new aspect it presented to his wife.

Jean Baxter was knitting by candle-light when he entered. Tibbie was fast asleep in a neighbouring room, and Sandy had ascended to his loft. He did not sleep, however, and he strained his ears to hear what the deep bass voice of his father was saying on his return from his walk.

'Jean,' he heard him say, 'it'll never do in this world. Sir Thomas 'll never consent to me settin' up my son in a position like Mr Haco. The boy must learn to harrow a field and thack a rick, as

I have done. It's good enough for me, and it should be good enough for him.'

'That's your auld-fashioned nonsense, Alexander,' said his wife, letting two or three loops slip in her irritation, and diving at them with her wire in an aggravated manner, 'Sir Thomas has nothing to do with your family, and he's ower taen up with his moles to give the thing another thocht. It's nae business o' Sir Thomas' what comes o' Sandy. And I can tell you the boy's not such a boy now. He'll no ask Sir Thomas' leave, or, I may say, yours or mine either. His mind's set and made up, and a surgeon Sandy will be. I believe Mr Haco got the notion into his head from our son.'

'If he's as determined as all that, he can gang his ways ower the Firth whenever he likes; I'll not trouble my head about him. But, Jean, if that boy starves in an Edinburgh loft—starves o' pure ambition—then the sin be upon your head, and

not upon mine, his father's, who warned him against it.'

'Starve!' said the mother. 'Sandy starve, and twenty dozens o' hens in the yard, and a meal-kist never empty, and bags o' the best potatoes on the coast, and nothing but a wee bit journey between him and his own home? You're forgetting yourself altogether, Alexander Baxter. You might have more pride in your son, and more confidence in me, who approves of his going to the college. You seem to forget that I have a ten-pound note of my own.'

'It took ye seeven years to save it.'

'Well, that's no matter. It's all the greater pleasure for me to part with it for so good an object when it is needed. I wish my son to use the faculties he has got, and to become a surgeon if he wishes it. He's none o' the starvin' sort, you might know by this time, if ye werena so much taken up with Sir Thomas. And let me tell you, Alexander, I've

been missing a hen now and then, and finely I knew into whose pocket they went, and what young foxes at the quarries they have been feeding; but I lost neither temper nor patience with you.'

The grieve looked humiliated. He was responsible for the brood of foxes at the quarries; they had to be fed somehow; and, in the absence of other varieties, he occasionally pocketed a fowl when he thought his wife was not looking.

Jean Baxter perceived her advantage at once. She pressed the subject no more. Her husband did not deny the delinquency.

'You'll make up your mind, then, Alexander, that Sandy goes to Edinburgh, and that he begins his studies this winter. Say you nothing about it to Sir Thomas; you'll find the moles will drive away any other idea out of his head.'

'That's eneugh, then,' exclaimed the grieve. 'If

he will to Auld Reekie, he maun to Auld Reekie.
I wash my hands o' the hale thing.

'Wise Alexander Baxter,' said his wife, terminating the whole discussion.

And Sandy, in his loft, turned over and fell asleep in a rapture of satisfaction.

CHAPTER III

AT THE UNIVERSITY GATES

HACO had never been in Edinburgh by himself. He had often been with a little crowd of Dreghorn boys to play cricket in the park at Holyrood, or to kick a football in Raeburn Place. On these occasions he had not distinguished himself much; his long hair being too much of a joke for both sides to permit him to feel as if he were one of them. They chaffed him as if he were a girl posing as a boy; and to tell the truth, when he should sometimes have been fielding a ball at long-on, he was

looking at Holyrood and thinking of Queen Mary, earning for himself thereby the title of 'butter fingers.'

His father before sending him to Edinburgh, had warned him that now he was no longer a boy but a man, he had better avoid all peculiarities of person, and recommended him to a barber's in Princes Street, where they would put a surgical look upon him, and fit him, in appearance, for walking the hospitals and working in the laboratories like others.

'Now, lad, it's a new life; take care of yourself,' said Sir Thomas, as he saw his son's gear strapped to the carriage; and Haco, glowing with the excitement of anticipation, looked out of the window.

'All right, father. I shall get on famously over there. You have been very good to me.'

'Eh? Eh?' cried Sir Thomas, using the ejaculations which came handiest to him, and looking

after the carriage—out of which Haco waved his right arm—with an expression which, for the surgeon, was almost sentimental.

At Edinburgh, Haco had his first experience of a hotel, for he could not go into lodgings till he had found such as would suit him. Being in a hotel was very pleasant for him. It was the first experience he had of being, in a manner, his own master. Thus, he ordered his own dinner, and the waiter, who knew where he came from, spoke to him with a deferential air, as if he were an authority; and after dinner he pointed to a room and said, 'Smoking room, sir,' so that Haco began to think, at his time of life, he ought to cultivate a cigar.

Accordingly, the first time he went out to the street he bought a handsome cigar-case and filled it with cigars, and made himself exceedingly ill with one of them, while he rang several bells in Queen Street to inquire about rooms.

At last he had a pair of rooms pointed out to him in the middle of Queen Street, the windows looking over the descending gardens and towards the Firth of Forth, and these he took without bargaining for. The landlady evidently took a liking to the lad at once, as he did to her, though she was a hard, angular woman, with bushy eyebrows and a screwed mouth.

‘The rooms are thirty shillings a week,’ she said, as Haco looked them over, and Haco said, ‘All right!’

Then she went out, and it seemed to Haco that she stood at the door for a few seconds, without moving, after which she came in and said,

‘Oh, sir, I beg your pardon, I’ve made a mistake of five shillings about the rooms. It’s a beautiful view, and my husband is a bank messenger, and the door of a safe shut on his right hand and has

disabled him. Thirty-five shillings I should have said, a week.'

'All right!' said Haco, as if she were conferring a favour on him by increasing the price. 'I am living at the Imperial just now. To-morrow I will bring in my things.'

'And when will you take your breakfast, sir?'

'Let me see,' said Haco, leaning up against the mantelpiece and looking at the picture on the opposite wall, 'what a disagreeable old buffer that is in the gown and bands! I shall have to take him down. I could never be at ease in a room where he was hanging.'

'Oh, sir, that is the clergyman who married me and Mr Ramsay. It's considered a very fine likeness.'

'And this awfully scraggy creature over the mantelpiece, with the pink nose, and the yellow knot of ribbon at her breast. I couldn't live in the same room with them.'

Mrs Ramsay went out into the passage again; she stood for fully a minute; then she returned, and looking mournfully at the pictures, she said,

‘They have always been very much admired, sir; and my husband says that if they are to be taken down, two pounds a week would be little enough for the rooms.’

‘All right!’ answered Haco, ‘let it be two pounds, then, on condition that the pictures are taken down.’

‘The first week to be paid in advance,’ said Mrs Ramsay; and Haco handed her a couple of sovereigns out of his vest pocket; the reward of which was instantaneous, as Haco heard her proclaiming to somebody that at last she had got a gentleman for a lodger. As there was no response to the assertion, it is probable that Mrs Ramsay shouted the remark in at an empty door.

'Then about your dinner, sir—when will you dine?'

'When I come home from college. Are you a good cook?'

'There's not a better at a chop or steak in all Edinburgh.'

'All right!' said Haco. 'I like the rooms, and as I'm to be here four years, I hope you will keep them in nice order for me. I like everything about me to be beautiful; it makes me miserable if everything is not'——

'In apple-pie order,' interpolated the landlady, chiming the sovereigns against each other.

'And now I'm off to matriculate.'

Haco had a great deal to see in the metropolis. The windows of the booksellers and the print-sellers were a delight to him, and he stopped here, there, and everywhere on his way up to college.

A crowd round one window attracted special

attention. The window contained photographs of all the professors, with their names under them. Some of them he had heard of at his father's. Sir Thomas discussed them with more frankness than admiration. Several of them he had seen mimicked at Dreghorn by one of the senior masters. As he looked at them now, however, he felt that a professor was a kind of human being who was not to be laughed at. On the contrary, as the crowd dissipated, and he stood alone, gazing in at their towzled heads and tragic expressions of face, he felt that the universe was behind them. Everything that was known these men knew. He felt as if the Faculty were a kind of worshipful Olympus, and he entered the shop to buy his own professors for the year.

It was at the University gates, however, that Haco really had the assurance that he was a person of no small consideration.

Leading into a massive covered court were stone steps, and about five and twenty members of the University stood upon them. Haco observed that they had their hats more or less on one side of their heads, and some of them were sucking the heads of canes, while they smiled or jeered, as the fancy took them, at persons who were not members of the University, outside.

His position as a student he realised with high satisfaction, as half-a-dozen men with bills crowded together to put them into his hand. On the whole, as he turned round on the steps and gazed with his neighbours at the crowd in the street, he thought it was well to be where he was. It was not long, however, before he received a hint that the life was a little rough, for a crowd of fifty students suddenly swept down the steps, carrying out into the street the loungers with the sticks. As for Haco, he

was pushed right across a thoroughfare, and only brought up at a bookseller's window, where it pleased him to see several large works on the 'The Eye,' with his father's name to them.

Back he went to the gates, and this time he entered the lofty quadrangle with the statue at the end of it and the class-room doors running round it, and the library windows out of which crowds of students were looking at the carriages of their teachers.

'Hillo, Spens!' Haco heard himself addressed, and looking, saw the dux of Dreghorn, who a couple of years ago had come to college and carried off prizes. 'What classes are you taking?'

'Chemistry and anatomy,' said Haco. 'I've been looking the calendars, Christie: What an awful swell you are! You must be quite a rich fellow, with all your bursaries! And how many medals have you now?'

'Oh, only five,' said Christie, much gratified,

putting his arm into Haco's, and walking him twice round the quadrangle. I say, Spens, all the fellows are looking at you; you must really cut your hair. You look like an old picture or something of that sort. A first year's student can't afford to be peculiar, you know.'

'There's a student with his hair all over his shoulders!'

'Oh, he can afford to do it. He's been seven years at college, and preaches like Old Boots. I heard him at Greyfriars one day. By Jove, he did roar and go on! He's a tremendous favourite, and can do anything. He knows far more theology than those who have taught him—oh, any amount more!'

'He must be a big swell,' said Haco. 'But I mean to wear my hair just as I like. It's nobody's business but mine. They may laugh if they like.'

'Well, they will laugh. But let's go into the library, up these broad steps. That's the chief

librarian, standing on the top step. He's a very obliging fellow, and knows a lot about the fifteenth century. But, by the way, what on earth made you think of being a doctor? It's a humbugging sort of profession.'

'I thought I might as well be that as anything else,' said Haco, while his friend pushed aside the glass doors, and, with an air of superior experience, ushered him into a tall ante-room, where books were given out, and into a vast hall, where books were lent for reference. A great murmur went up from the leather-covered desks, and there was a constant coming and going of students with slips, getting out dictionaries, books of plates, and what not.

'I say, what a row!' remarked Haco. 'Do you mean to tell me they study here? How can a man read, and know what he's reading, when there's so much talk?'

'It isn't like this always. This noise is only

because fellows haven't settled down yet to work. At the beginning of the session it's always like that. Nobody can do anything for a day or two. Do you see that big fellow with the whiskers? He's very nearly an advocate. Another year, and he'll be done, and be walking up and down Parliament House. He's got all the law class prizes.'

'What's he doing with the note-book?'

'Oh, he's beating up names for the new Lord Rector—the election comes off at the end of the month. By the way, who are you voting for?'

'I didn't think of anybody. Who's the best fellow?'

'There's three of them. None of them are favourites of mine. I would have some Oxford scholar, if I were to have my way. Most of them go for lawyers or politicians.'

'I say, you fellow with the long hair, who are you voting for?' asked the tall man with

the note-book, over the heads of a little knot of students, who were deep in a discussion as to whether it was really a conclusive argument that they existed because they thought they existed.

‘Say Tweedledum,’ prompted Christie.

And Haco called out:

‘Tweedledum, probably.’

‘Ah, you’re too smart to live,’ said the canvasser, rushing off to another first year, and booking him, because of the honour he felt in being asked to be booked.

Haco stood for some time at the window with his friend, and had all the celebrities in the room pointed out to him. Such a one had corrected the Latin professor on a minute point about the subjunctive mood one day, and had been told, in a torrent of Morayshire Scotch, that he was the sanguinary son of a gun. Such another had been a summer in Germany, and knew philology

too well. It was hardly fair to other competitors, for anybody who had been at Germany would, of course, know roots. A third was a fellow who, according to his own account, 'never stewed,' but who was as yellow as a frog, all the same, and always stood high in examinations. A fourth was a cad, who cut pages out of books and took them in with him to competitions. And so on, and so on, till Haco was put in possession of the leading luminaries of the room.

'If you like, then,' said Christie, 'I'll go with you and matriculate.'

Whereupon Haco purchased his ticket and became one of the three thousand.

CHAPTER IV

SANDY'S FIRST DAY

SANDY BAXTER had been told by Dominie Dunn that if he went to Salisbury Street (a block of houses fronting the crags, which hang over Edinburgh to the west of Arthur's Seat) he would be likely to find lodgings suited to his means. And to Salisbury Street Sandy went direct, on arriving by train from Binkie Mains. On the whole, the district seemed to him the dirtiest he had seen in town; but once he had mounted a stair in Salisbury Street and knocked at a door which seemed to

belong to a window where a paper with 'Lodgings' on it hung out, he found the houses not so forbidding as they looked.

Once inside, he was shown a room which commanded a long view of the crags, with a recess off it in which there was a box-bed, and the landlady offered it to him for four shillings a week.

'It's a graun place for a stoovent,' said the landlady, surveying the ribbed rocks and the picturesque red dots, which, to the gaze of a telescope, would have come out soldiers. 'There's a saxpence on the room for the view. I have a polisman neebor tae ye; he pays four an' saxpence. Certy, ye'll hae tae behave yersel', or he'll tak' ye up.'

Sandy was not long in settling about his room. He would bring a sack and a chest in the evening, he said, for, his father being a farmer across the Firth, he took some things with him to eat.

'I'll be real glad to see anything off a fairm,' said the landlady; and the lad walked up the hill

to Nicolson Street, and behind the University found the extra-mural school, where he had been advised to become a pupil.

It was an old house, of a rambling, heavy description, which had once belonged to a Lord Provost, and which had been bought by half-a-dozen doctors, who were allowed to form themselves into a 'Medical School.'

Sandy's appearance at the porch of the school woke up a hall-porter, who, with a medal on his breast and a stick in his hand, gazed at him with astonishment when he asked when the classes would be opened.

'When the students come to attend them,' he said, motioning Sandy into a waiting-room, which had been constructed for the use of students during rainy weather. Thereupon the stick thumped along a passage, and Sandy heard the porter announce, with an unaccountably surprised excitement:

'A student! a student! Sure's death, gentlemen, a student! He came in the noo. He's in the waitin'-room.'

'For goodness' sake, sergeant,' a voice said, 'don't look so astonished. What like is he? Bring him in—bring him in at once. Gentlemen, the extra-mural is founded at last. I believe we will run the University out of existence.'

Sandy was obsequiously shown through the passage to the room where the extra-mural doctors were standing.

There were three of them, with something of the tragic expression on their faces which Haco had seen in the shop photographs, as if knowledge had a crushing and depressing effect.

'You want to attend the extra-mural?' asked one of them, warming himself at the fire in a favourite backward attitude. 'You will take chemistry, of course?' he added, as a colleague, looking at Sandy, hastily said,

'You will begin your course of anatomy, up stairs, at once, with me.'

'I shall have much pleasure in seeing you at my lectures on physiology,' said a third man.

And Sandy felt as if he were the means of conferring a great boon upon them, as, indeed, in a manner, he was; for the extra-mural had not yet got itself properly asserted in the face of the world. It was young and experimental, and people were shy of it; and it was in that way that Sandy Baxter was fortunate enough to secure to his own tuition a whole staff of first-class teachers, a whole college system, and the resources of an entire house, for nobody joined except himself that session.

There were, indeed, half-a-dozen ladies anxious to become doctors who applied; but Sandy was informed that the house would have had to shut up altogether if it took them in. They were not, therefore, admitted.

The enthusiasm of the house for lecturing was such, however, that Sandy had no sooner joined than he was ordered to take his seat in a class-room, and knowledge began to be poured into him on the first day of his arrival.

After lecture he went down to Nicolson Street again, and found out the hospital—a vast institution, hidden from view by a slope in the ground and intervening houses. It was late afternoon then, and all the surgeons had rolled away in their carriages to collect guineas at different ‘airts’ of the town.

There were no students in the corridors, and Sandy wandered on alone for a considerable time, meeting an occasional nurse with a basket of bandages, or seeing a door open upon a house-surgeon’s room, where the house-surgeon was lying on his back on his sofa, reading.

He had gone up several broad stairs, and peeped behind screens into different wards,

where the patients were sitting up with newspapers in their hands, and gone down, as he thought, to the cellars, when he saw a tall figure rush out of a side room, making gestures of despair.

'It's Mr Haco,' said Sandy. 'There's something wrong with him.'

Something was, certainly, wrong; for Haco after rushing to one end of the passage, fled back in Sandy's direction, waving a towel.

'What's the matter?' called out Sandy; and Haco, stopping as he fled past him, called out,

'I've killed a man! I've killed a man! He's dead! He is in there. And I have done it. I did it just now by mistake.'

Sandy ran into the open door, followed by Haco. There was a cool, bullet-headed youth standing over a prostrate figure on a table; the figure had ceased to breathe, and as Sandy came

up to the table, timidly followed by Haco, the youth said,

‘I never saw such a duffer! Here’s a fellow fell off a tramway-car and broke his back, and Crum isn’t in, and we had to administer chloroform, and when my back was turned this fellow stuffed the towel down the man’s throat. He’s as dead as a door-nail now. There’ll be a nice row about this. You told me you were a son of Sir Thomas Spens, and, of course, I thought you knew better how to hold a chloroform towel than to cover the nose and mouth with it. No, you needn’t listen at his breast. I see you’re a green hand too. The man’s gone. By Jove, I believe you’ll get ten years for it, though his back was broken, and he would have died at any rate.’

Haco stood ringing his hands; all the blood had forsaken his face; he looked the picture of young agony.

'Oh, I can't stay here and look at him; I never saw death before. It's awful. I killed him! I killed him! Oh! Oh! Oh!' And, with his hands at his eyes, to which no tears came, Haco went out into the broad subterranean corridor, and tragically paced backwards and forwards, without knowing what he was about.

As he walked, a little female figure, clad in a sister of mercy's robe, with a cross at her throat, made her appearance at the end of the passage. She looked at Haco out of a pair of soft, dove-like eyes, and judged that he must be in pain. She came near him as he rung his hands, and, looking up at him, in the gentlest voice, she said,

'You will tell me what the matter is?'

Haco looked at the gentle face, and the dove-like eyes, and smooth brown hair, and stopped his pacing. He did not need to look twice to know that he might speak freely to the wandering angel of the corridors.

'I have killed a man. I am a murderer,' said Haco, his voice shaking with agitation, as he set off again to wring his hands.

'I am Lady Mary Hay. I am a nursing sister. The head nurse pointed you out to me in the children's ward. You are Haco Spens. What has happened?'

Haco repeated what he said before, and rushed desperately to the room where the motionless patient lay along the table.

Sandy was arguing in a pertinacious voice with the bullet-headed youth, pointing out to him as a surmise that it was probable the man was dead before the chloroform was applied; to which the youth was responding that, 'He'd better teach his grandmother to suck eggs.'

The Lady Mary at that moment showed her little figure at the door, and with the tenderest accents possible, asked,

'He is dead, then?'

'Yes, he is,' said the bullet-head, irritated by Sandy's argument; 'and this fellow has killed him. Crum will be off his head with indignation. It'll perhaps get into the papers, and I believe there'll be a trial. His relatives 'll make a jolly row. This duffer stuffed the chloroform towel down his throat.'

'Alas! he is, poor man, I fear, quite dead,' said Lady Mary, lifting the rigid arm which hung over the table, and feeling the wrist for signs of a pulse.

There was no pulse. The blood had ceased to flow, the heart to beat, and the girl, leaning over the table, closed the eyes reverently.

'He is dead,' she said to the house-surgeon, who entered at that moment.

'Oh, I daresay,' said the new arrival. 'I saw when he came in he couldn't hold out five minutes.'

'This fellow killed him,' repeated the bullet-head.

'How can you be so cruel?' asked Lady Mary

indignantly, as she looked from Haco to the dead man.

‘How can he be such an ass?’ asked the house-surgeon. ‘You’ll be plucked in your clinical if you make mistakes like that. Thorburn, this man was dead before the chloroform touched him.’

Haco, however, did not hear the comforting intelligence. He was vacantly moaning about the corridors when the house-surgeon gave his opinion, and it was only when Lady Mary, coming out of the room, touched him on the arm and told him what had been said, that he began to experience a little relief. The agony of the death, however, had been so terrible to him that he could not readily recover himself.

‘Come with me,’ said Lady Mary, seeing that it was impossible just then to console him, ‘round this corner to the extreme end of the passage, where the head nurse has her room.’

'Mrs Blake, this is Sir Thomas Spens' son. I told you I had seen him in the children's ward.'

'Ah!' said Mrs Blake, 'you have been at an operation, surely. How ill you look! But all the great surgeons have fainted at their first. You will be a great surgeon.'

'I don't think I ever shall,' said Haco, who was now quieted by the quiet voices. 'I don't believe I shall ever forget the look on that man's face as long as I live. How can I become a surgeon with blood on my hands?'

And he shivered like an aspen leaf.

'You take it too seriously, though,' said Mrs Blake. 'What was it?' she asked of the Lady Mary, in a lower voice.

'A mistake with chloroform,' whispered the Lady Mary. 'I am afraid the man is dead.'

And the head nurse rose hurriedly and went out of the room.

'You will make yourself a patient instead of

a physician, if you do not consent to look at the matter with our eyes,' said Lady Mary, standing near Haco, and speaking to him with an air of concern. 'You should accept the house-surgeon's opinion; he knows better than Mr Thorburn, who, I am afraid, though he has been much about the hospital, is a poor judge, having been "plucked" at least seven times. You shouldn't mind what a man of that sort says. He really doesn't know. And he is so disappointed that I think he, perhaps, is a little malicious.'

'It has fairly thrown me off my balance,' said Haco, stretching himself on a sofa, and feeling, as the Lady Mary talked, that his nerves were being assailed by a kind of music.

'You will soon recover and get accustomed to all sorts of scenes. At first I was terribly taken aback. I am getting, not used to them, you know, for that would take away all pity,

but used to them enough not to waste my pity by allowing myself to become hysterical. Why should one come to an hospital at all if one is not able to help?’

‘You must be very brave to face it,’ said Haco, looking at her white hands, and the abounding pity of her lips, and the quiet tenderness of her glance. ‘You cannot need to do it. The sister of the Earl of Strawfield is not compelled to nurse.’

‘There is a stronger compulsion than money,’ said the Lady Mary. ‘I was called to the work and I have accepted it. You will like it, too, presently.’

‘I will like what you like,’ said Haco, not quite realizing what he had said.

‘You will like it because it is the noblest work which is left us to do,’ she said; and her dove-like eyes darkened on him, and she was smiling like that when Mrs Blake came back.

She had seen nothing of the dead man, and concluded that he must have been carried to the *post mortem* room, though he had only risen and walked out of the hospital, arm in arm, with Thorburn.

CHAPTER V

BLACK-MAIL

HACO did not go back to the hospital for a week, so that the dressership which Dr Crum had given him was filled up. He could not go back to face the terrible incident which had occurred; it was all he could do to summon up courage to go to the University. He went there, however, and one of the first men he saw on the steps was Thorburn.

Haco would have avoided him if possible, for he smelt of stale ale, and his hands were dirty

and his collar frayed. Though he was only a young man, too, he had some grey hairs in his head, which gave him anything but a venerable appearance. But Thorburn was not to be avoided. He looked at Haco trying to go up the steps without noticing him, and called out,

‘I say, Leeks, Crum ’ll give you it when he catches you. He’s had to tell any amount of lies to screen you from the rage of the relatives.’

Haco’s hair did not hang about his shoulders like leeks, as Thorburn hinted; rather, it rippled in a natural wave of brown gold; but it pleased Thorburn to be irritating, and, seeing Haco make off without turning, he put his pipe in his pocket and followed him into the quadrangle. Thorburn was one of the students who had hung about the University for eight years without passing an examination. Nobody knew exactly where he came from, but his face suggested a creole origin,

for it was of a dusky hue, and the chief feature in it was the white of the eye.

‘Look here, youngster,’ said Thorburn, following at his heels, ‘d’ye hear what I say to you? The widow of that dead man came to me this morning, and I had to give her a sovereign to keep the life in her two brats.’

Haco turned at once, and trying to overcome his first disgust, he said, holding out his hand,

‘It was very generous of you. Here are a couple of sovereigns: give her one some time again. You must tell me her address. I shall call and do what I can for them.’

Thorburn took the money with so greedy a gesture that Haco ought to have seen or suspected that something was wrong. He had as yet, however, no knowledge of meanness of that particular kind; so it did not occur to him. He bade Thorburn Good-day, and went up the steps to the library again. There he saw Christie hard at work

behind a mythological dictionary, a pair of lexicons, and a Greek text; but when Haco came up to him, he seemed quite glad to have a respite. He leant back from his book, clasped his hands behind his head, and said,

‘Well, Spens old fellow, how are you getting on? You have joined your classes, I suppose?’

‘Yes. I’m in chemistry and anatomy. Do you know, I fancy I shall hate medicine, somehow.’

‘I think it is a humbugging profession,’ said Christie. ‘I don’t know how you ever thought of going into it. Why, you used to write poems and sketches in the *School Magazine*. Pretty good they were, too, if I recollect right. You had one poem, I remember, on a bit of ivy in your window. It was sweetly pretty. Fancy a doctor going about with rhymes in his head! though, by the way, old Garth did it.’

‘And Doctor John Brown,’ said Haco.

‘And Oliver Wendell Holmes,’ added Christie.

‘ Hang it, yes, when you come to think of it, there’s a number of them have gone for writing. If I were you, Haco, I wouldn’t go on with drugs if I didn’t like it. Write to your father, and say you hate the whole thing—you hate the sight of the bones; you hate the smell of the dissecting room; you hate the hospital tragedies.’

Haco started and glanced at his friend.

‘ You don’t know my father, if you think I am at liberty to change my mind like that. He never alters an opinion of his own, once he has formed it. I doubt if he would ever speak to me if I were to give it up now. I must go on; but I do envy you with your old-world poetry, and your middle-age romances, and your modern philosophies.’

And Haco sighed and turned away to ask out a book. When he got back to Queen Street in the evening, what was his surprise to find Thorburn, a little tipsy, on a chair in his room, waiting for him.

If there was anything Haco hated, it was the sight of a human being in that condition. He would go round a square to avoid the spectacle of a reeling man. Thorburn was not so bad as that; but he was decidedly tipsy, as he rose to hold out his hand to Haco, who looked at him and began to feel a little sick.

‘How did you happen to find me out here?’ he asked, with some of the vehemence of his father’s manner on him.

‘Spens,’ said the student, rolling his white eyeballs, ‘you trust to me. I’ll see you through. I’ll not let them touch you. I’ll stand by you through thick and thin, hot and cold. Any fellow might have made the mistake, you know. With all my experience, I might have made it myself, though I know as much about chloroform as old Crum.’

Haco did not reply; but when he went to his bedroom to prepare for his dinner, he noticed that he

was very miserable in expression compared to what he used to be. It was so different from what he had anticipated. At the very outset a dreadful tragedy, and this dusky roundhead in the other room no mean part of it, with his offers of friendship! The tipsy creature! Haco felt that he hated him, and he seemed to feel the smell of him, though there was a door and stout wall between them.

‘I’ll see you through with it; don’t you be afraid,’ he began again, as Haco came out to his solitary meal. ‘You trust to me.’

‘How did you find me out?’ Haco asked again.

‘From your name and address in the wards, of course. But I’ll see you through it. Don’t you be afraid.’

Haco’s dinners in Queen Street were very unlike what he had been used to at Binkie Manor. The only variety he had was a change from chops underdone to steak overdone, or *vice versa*, though

Mrs Ramsay made great flourishes of trumpets about his meals, and always explained them into magnificence. She had a capacity for explaining everything; even a rank egg at breakfast she airily dismissed with the remark, 'Oh, it is a pudding egg,' after which Haco was expected to devour it in silence.

'I can't offer you any dinner,' said Haco, 'it's such a poor affair. Besides, I am very likely keeping you. In fact, Good-bye, Mr Thorburn.'

Thorburn answered by pushing a chair to the table and sitting down.

'It isn't much of a dinner, certainly,' he remarked, affably. 'In rooms like these I thought you would have had a joint and a bit of fish and some wine. They're as swell rooms as I ever saw a student have.'

'There is some wine in there,' said Haco, in a distant way, pointing to a sideboard. 'But

somehow it doesn't seem so good as when I used to get a glass of it with father.'

'I'm rather a judge of wine,' said Thorburn; 'let me see it;' and the wine being produced, he helped himself largely.

'Been changed at nuss,' he said, winking over his tumbler. 'Landlady—you understand. Scoffed your old wine, and put in tenpenny from round the corner. I know their ways. You trust to me. I'll see you through.'

'It is a base suspicion, Mr Thorburn. I have no reason to think my landlady would do anything of the sort. She is an excellent and attentive woman. I hope you won't repeat that.'

'By Jove! I never heard a fellow praise his landlady before. You'll get over that. I've had hundreds of them since I came to Edinburgh, and I never knew one of them who wasn't a drunken thief.'

'You have had great experience,' said Haco,

enduring what he could not get rid of, 'Why haven't you got your degree in all these years? Lady Mary told me you hadn't graduated.'

'You mean she told you I've been plucked. I want to be friendly to you, Haco Spens, and I would advise you to have as little to do with Mary Hay as you can. I know for a fact that her brother, the Earl of Strawfield, has cut up rough about her becoming a nursing sister, and when a man in his position won't speak to his own sister, you take my word, she's a pretty bad lot. She pretends to be precious kind to the patients, and all that, and they toady her because she's connected with a high family; but I know better. She's no good. And speak you to her as little as you like.'

'She is very gentle and beautiful,' said Haco, pushing aside the wine, which seemed all of a sudden to have become unpalatable to him.

'Ho! ho! ho!' laughed Thorburn, to whom

the inferior quality of the wine was no drawback to drinking it. 'That's all you know. Wait till you have had my experience. But you ask me why I haven't graduated. It's nothing but the spite of the professors. A professor is nothing if he isn't spiteful. You wait. If a professor thinks he sees a fellow who is cleverer than himself, that's a good reason why he should pluck him. Now look at me; I admit it—I am the best plucked man in the Edinburgh University. I haven't passed a single medical examination; but I glory in it. They won't let me through because they're afraid of me.'

'Why should they be afraid of you?'

'Because they know I'm no quack; that I understand my business; that I can pick out symptoms and prescribe with the best of them. I can do all the operations they can do. Why, bless you, I think nothing of extracting an eye, of rifling a skull, or'——

Haco took the wine and replaced it in the sideboard. Thorburn's eyes followed it with an expression of disgust.

'But I'll bring 'em to their senses. I know a fellow in the Channel Islands who can give degrees quite as good as theirs; and blowed if I don't get a doctor of divinity degree and a doctor of medicine degree and put some herbs in a window, and practise in spite of them.'

Thorburn looked loathsome at that moment to Haco. He had never seen any one he disliked so much. He rang the bell to bring in the landlady; perhaps the diversion would suggest to him that he had better go. But it did not; and Haco, turning round suddenly on him from the window, found, to his unspeakable disgust, that he was leering in a knowing way in the direction of the sideboard.

After the landlady was gone, he came back to the subject of Haco's sovereigns.

‘Spens, I say, old fellow, I’ve stayed too long. I only wanted to say to you that you’ll have to come down with some more dust for that poor, bereaved family. I’ll keep my hand on it, you know, and see you through. I won’t see you rounded on, that I won’t. But if you could fork out, say, five pounds to-night, I think I could see you through.’

As a fly may feel in the thick web of a bloated spider, so felt Haco at that moment. The course he might have taken lay open before him. He might have gone to Dr Crum and asked his advice ; and that once taken, he would have been no more troubled by Thorburn. But there was a sensitivity about the lad which made him anticipate criticism with painful foreboding. Then he did not see his way through the difficulty. If, as he believed, he had deprived a family of its bread-winner, was he not entitled to do what he could for the survivors ? Had his father been a less brusque and a more

sympathetic man, he would have written him for his advice, and all would have been well. As it was, he saw nothing before him but trouble; and this malignant sot who asked him for money seemed the only present means of bringing him out of it.

Then, for the first time, it occurred to him how curious a circumstance it was that Sandy Baxter should have appeared to him so suddenly in the corridor of the hospital. If he could but see Sandy now and confront this fellow with him? He would write to Binkie Mains and ask about him. Sandy had some mysterious intention of coming to Edinburgh—he might be in it now.

‘I can’t give you five, but here are three. That makes five pounds that you have had from me to-day,’ said Haco to the waiting student.

When he had gone, Haco wrote a letter to Tibbie Baxter, to ask her about her brother, and where he lived if he happened to be in Edinburgh.

CHAPTER VI

THE NURSING SISTER

LADY MARY HAY, sister of the Earl of Strawfield, was only eighteen years of age; but people who think a great deal for and about others sometimes contract a wistfulness of expression which gives them an older look.

It was so with Lady Mary; her Quaker-like appearance and her pretty affectation of subdued colours in dressing gave her an additional air of experience which weighted her with more years than she had really seen. Though she was so

young, however, she was not without views of her own; and it was true enough, as Thorburn had informed Haco, that she had adopted a course which the Earl of Strawfield much resented. Being the sister of an earl seemed to that personage career enough for any modest girl, and being his sister, a very brilliant career. Nor need it have been without its attractions. Strawfield was one of the stateliest houses on the Firth of Forth. Its grounds were laid out in all the perfection of bosky vales, which sloped towards little bays of glittering shingle. There was extensive woodland round it, and the riding-paths on the estate led among moss-covered bridges and down leafy avenues, where a quiet spirit like Lady Mary's might have had a reasonable enjoyment of life, as, indeed, she had, until her brother married, and his countess, an ardent sportswoman, began to make Strawfield uninhabitable. Lady Mary had old-fashioned ideas; she thought, for example,

that loading and firing a gun was not a womanly exercise, and she declined to share it with her sister-in-law's friends when Strawfield was filled with them. Nor would she handle a fishing-rod, nor tumble in a net, in order to strengthen her limbs. Her tastes were unaccountably different; and when the earl, who was only a few years her senior, said to her, 'Mary, you are a born nun: I don't know what to do about you,' she replied,

'I think, Strawfield, you are right. I have something of the nun in my nature. When dear Doctor Crum was here, the other day, looking at the shot hand of one of your friends, I arranged with him to become assistant to his head nurse at the hospital, where I mean to make myself useful for a time.'

The earl was dumbfounded. He looked at his sister as if she were wildly out of her mind. He suggested that she was kicking over the traces

with a vengeance, and that he was unspeakably ashamed. Crum should never enter Strawfield again. He was an old idiot; he was a meddling quack. She must abandon this 'fad.' As if there weren't plenty of females to do that sort of work for proper wages! He was, indeed, exceedingly angry, and for the first time he realized that under the nunlike demeanour of Lady Mary there was a vein of persistence amounting to obstinacy. For all she answered him was,

'Strawfield, I have written to my lawyer, who has taken a house in Great King Street for me. I have arranged everything as I wish it to be. You need not trouble about me any more.'

And no further words of the earl affected her. She went to Edinburgh, and spent her days at the hospital, and had been doing so for some months when Haco first met her.

The meeting with Haco had impressed Lady

Mary very much. The incident was so unusual, and he had been so powerfully affected by the student's charge about the chloroform, and he had been so simple when she administered verbal consolation to him, that she looked out for him each day in the children's ward where she worked. But he did not come that week. She met him, however, one day, at a bookseller's (Haco had got *carte blanche* from his father to buy all the books he wanted, and he was doing it), and, standing behind one of the well-filled shelves, she said to him,

'I had expected to see you again at the hospital. Why do you not come? Dr Crum is displeased, and has been obliged to find a substitute for you.'

'I have been so put about that I hate the sight of the hospital gates. But I am beginning to recover myself a little, and I am buying all the books in chemistry and anatomy that have

ever been published. I think that will be a good way to know everything that is required. Besides, I've never had a library, and it feels very nice to be surrounded by books in one's own room.'

'And you think that the best plan?' asked Lady Mary. 'I should have thought it better to get up what was in the handbooks of the classes first of all; then I should become a collector after that.'

'Oh, no; 'collecting is certainly the best plan. There is something so repulsive about a small handbook, and something so encouraging about large, old books, all one's own. I shall study far better, knowing that everything is within reach of my arm. Besides, what's the use of a man's father giving him leave to buy what he requires if he doesn't take advantage of it? But I am not confining myself to scientific books. I am buying all these—a complete set of the English poets.'

‘I should think they would be very expensive.’

‘I didn’t think of that,’ said Haco, airily. ‘Of course it all goes down to Sir Thomas Spens’ account.’

Lady Mary smiled, and said,

‘You have not been to any of my evenings. Would you care to come? Or, stay, have you views about who may or may not study medicine? Do you think, for example, it is quite wrong and unnatural for us to addict ourselves to science, and to ask for degrees?’

‘I have never thought of it.’

‘Then come to my next evening. Every Friday I receive my friends, and I shall be very glad indeed to see you; and if Sir Thomas ever comes over, bring him.’

‘He wouldn’t leave his moles on any account; but I shall be delighted to come. I have so many letters to deliver to people I don’t care about

that it will be a positive joy to me to come to a house because I like it.'

'You are very good to say so. Next Friday evening then. But don't let your work stop because of—of the'——

'Yes, I know,' said Haco, his brow darkening as he thought of that rigid figure on the table, and Lady Mary closing its eyes.

The interval between that meeting and Lady Mary's evening was spent without incident.

The demands of the bereaved family were not further pressed by Thorburn, and Haco did not see him even on the steps of the University. He began to settle down, therefore, to his work in his own way. This was Haco's way: He went to his lectures, and diligently took notes of chemical symbols and anatomical phrases, and for a night or two he committed them to memory, intending to be abreast of his lectures when the examinations came. Then it occurred to him

that, as the first class-examinations were not to be held till Christmas, he need not hurry. After all, a few evenings would serve his purpose quite well, for had he not the most retentive memory at Dreghorn? That left him free to read what and when he liked, and as it was Haco's nature, as soon as he felt he was compelled to do one thing, ardently to wish to do something else, he read much that had nothing to do with bones and elements.

His room had quite altered its appearance. Mrs Ramsay had no objection to his running up shelves, and to his filling them with books. She took down her dusty ecclesiastical portraits, too, and let him hang up ideal figures from the Greek Cosmology, and, altogether, his walls produced a very elegant and scholarly effect.

Notwithstanding that he was persecuted with the idea of the dead man in the hospital, he sometimes spent some very tranquil hours in his

room, when the wind was whistling up from the Firth and shaking his windows; for having recovered his first disagreeable sensations on smoking a cigar, he now smoked with ease and comfort, and enjoyed seeing himself surrounded with a nimbus of blue reek of his own creating. He had no doubt whatever, as he put out his hand to wave the smoke aside, that now, indeed he was a man.

On Friday evening he went down to Great King Street to Lady Mary's, and very carefully he dressed himself before he went. Haco liked nothing better than to feel himself well dressed. He believed that as the flowers put on colours to their petals, men and women should adorn themselves with an eye to beautiful effect. There was thus quite a little murmur when his tall figure appeared at the door of the drawing-room—his double-breasted satin vest cut to exhibit a liberal display of linen, his cuffs well shown

under the sleeves of his coat, a large signet-ring upon the third finger of his right hand.

Lady Mary's room had not filled up for the evening, so that Haco was not overlooked. On the contrary, Lady Mary — appearing, Haco thought, the embodiment of daintiness — approached and drew him into a little crowd where old Dr Crum was haranguing. He was, as yet, the only man in the room, and he was talking in a vehement monologue about that obnoxious close corporation, the University which was so blind.

'So blind, sir,' he said, looking at Haco from the tips of his curls to the points of his boots 'that not even Sir Thomas Spens, of Binkie Manor, could give it a seeing pair of eyes.'

Dr Crum didn't give Haco an opportunity of answering his pretty compliment to his father's skill, but began to expatiate, so that Haco had an opportunity of looking round the circle.

With the exception of Lady Mary, he was not much prepossessed by the ladies who were present. For one thing, they nearly all wore their hair short, and some of them even parted it at the right or left side, giving them an air of masculine decision which was not a little alarming.

Their mouths, too, were, perhaps, more firm than affectionate, and some of them struck Haco as if they had never had mothers. Their talk was all of sciences, about which they were full of enthusiasm. They were the little brigade of ladies who were besieging the University and demanding to be educated. Haco had no objections to them in the world, but he wished they had all been as pretty as Lady Mary.

He sat for an hour, listening mostly, and was just beginning to feel the evening pall a little, when an eccentric voice was heard outside the drawing-room, shouting,

‘Bonnie Mary Hay, it’s a haliday to me.’

And the voice was presently followed by a lithe active figure, having a face which wore the expression of a bird, and hair which hung like Haco's own, all over the shoulders.

'I am so glad you are making a holiday of it, professor,' said Lady Mary, advancing to him and bringing him in to the inner circle, which was not a little pleased at any diversion which should give somebody else than Dr Crum an innings.

When Professor Stewart came into a room, however, it was no use any other man attempting to speak. His voice filled the drawing-room at once.

'You're all of a clan here,' he shouted. 'That's a mistake, a great mistake. Crum, can you sing a Scotch song?'

'No; but you might sing one—a Greek one,' said Crum, irritated at being bowled over so summarily by the new arrival.

'As a delicate compliment to our hostess, I

propose to sing "Bonnie Mary Hay,"' responded the professor.

Whereupon he sat down at the piano, turning to face his auditors for a moment, and to gesticulate at Lady Mary, who stood smiling at him.

The song was given with much vigour and precision, and the professor, dancing off his seat saw Haco leaning against a curtain, looking at Lady Mary with an unmistakable glance of approbation and affection.

'Hillo!' cried the professor, 'who have we here? What's your name? You have the courage of your opinions, evidently. Are you an actor or what?'

'It is Mr Spens,' said Lady Mary; and the old professor, dragging him out by the elbow, had a long stare into his face.

'Very like a poet; I never missed the face of a poet in my life. You're a poet, young fellow. Lady Mary, what does he write?—eh?—or

what does he recite? Spens, Spens, the surgeon's son, eh? Well, now, you should know "The king sits in Dunfermline toun."

'I do know it,' said Haco.

'Ha! you're a brick. Recite it this moment, and let these scientific ladies know that the microscope and the tweezers don't exhaust the universe.'

"The king sits in Dunfermline toun,
Drinking the blude-red wine;
Oh, whaur shall I get a skeely skipper
To sail this ship of mine?

* * * *

"To Noroway, to Noroway,
To Noroway o'er the faem;
The king's daughter to Noroway,
It's thou maun take her hame."

And Haco recited the whole ballad, Professor Stewart bursting in, now and again, with a repetition of,

"I saw the new moon late yestreen."

"And gurly grew the sea."

"Half owre, half owre to Aberdour,

'Tis fifty fathoms deep,

And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,

Wi' the Scotch lords at his feet !"

and such lines as he was peculiarly struck with. When he left, he embraced Haco, and announced, abruptly, 'You come to my house on such and such a night.'

CHAPTER VII

THE APPARITION

HACO left Lady Mary's house with a feeling of having been much amused, and of having contributed some amusement in turn. The recitation of the ballad had been received with the greatest applause, and the gratification of the applause was strong upon Haco, as he went up the steep street in the moonlight towards his rooms. He felt so exhilarated that, instead of going at once into the house he continued walking until he came out upon Princes Street.

The rugged mass of rock on which the castle is perched threw a black shadow across the intervening valley and the street, but behind the rock the moon was sailing white among some drifts of cloud. Otherwise, the sky was blue as steel, and the air of the evening as cool.

Haco did not mind the passengers on the street much, the spectacle of the rock filled him with so much awe; and he involuntarily let pass through his mind these farther centuries and the men which filled them with the clash of arms on the craggy heights.

He walked all the length of Princes Street, and ascending the Calton Hill, found the air as if it blew from icebergs. Yet it was not unpleasant to him, as he looked over the shining lights of Leith to the distant shore-line of Fife, and heard the murmur of the city rise round him in an ascending wave. It stirred his pulses so much that he felt the necessity of

getting back to his room to write a poem about it; and he descended the Calton on the Leith side, with that view.

'Hail' this, 'Oh' that, and 'Ye' the other thing kept coming to his lips, and he was in a temporary trance of moonlight, blue air, and distant sea, when he walked back to Queen Street with quickened steps.

Not far from his own door an incident occurred which woke him up.

It was the sight of a limp figure leaning against a railing, with the white moonlight on its face, or on that side of its face which was exposed to the light. The neck seemed dislocated; but Haco saw enough of it to stagger back in fright.

It was the dead man of the hospital table! He could not be mistaken. He knew his head and arms, and the expression on his white face

was the expression he wore on that fatal afternoon.

Haco rubbed his eyes and gazed, and pitifully looked up and down the street, to see if there were anybody coming to wake him from his vision.

There was no one coming. He turned, therefore, slowly from the spectacle, trying to convince himself that it was an illusion, and that there was nothing standing there which corresponded to what he thought he saw. But before he reached his door he was compelled, in spite of himself, to look back. The light of the moon shone still more strongly on the limp figure. There could be no doubt about it; but as he looked he perceived that the head had rolled round to the other shoulder, and that the jaw wore a ghastly look of disconnection.

Yes, there could be no doubt it was the figure

of the hospital table. Haco did not reason about it. Indeed, he was so overcome with horror that any possibility of reasoning was denied him; and he was not much consoled, when he had actually got to his door and turned round, to find that the figure had vanished, and that there was only a pathway of light where it had been leaning.

He was so tremulous at the door that he had to ask the aid of a policeman to open it for him; and the policeman, inquiring of him if he were ill, he said he saw an illusion.

‘I saw him, too,’ said the policeman. ‘It’s a spring-heel. I’ll get a haud o’ him yet.’

But Haco had gone in and shut his door. Up stairs he found two letters from Binkie. One of them was from his father. He opened it vacantly, and found.

‘DEAR HACO,—I am pleased you are settled comfortably, Keep your letters within reasonable

bounds of length, for my time is fully occupied. Cultivate some good companions—hard-working fellows—and follow up your letters of introduction. Don't over-read yourself, but at least read enough to enable you to stand respectably in the class lists. You may come over at Christmas, if you like ; but that is as you find it convenient. You are now a man, and have to act a man's part.—Your father,

‘THOMAS SPENS.’

He opened the second letter. It was from Tibbie Baxter. There was a whiff of the garden about it. As he raised it to read, two little flowers of ‘constancy,’ as Haco called them, dropped on the table. Flowers of constancy at that season of the year ! They must have anticipated their own spring-time by several winter months. But why should Tibbie Baxter put bluebells into his letter ? Haco read :

‘DEAR MR HACO SPENS,—My brother, Sandy, is in Edinburgh. He is shy, and does not like to say

what he is doing; but I may say that he is studying to be a doctor, and he lives at No. 19 Salisbury Street, looking out on the Craigs, and if you go to see him, you may be sure he will be glad enough. I was on the shore to-day, and saw your yacht lying quite snug in the lee of the shingle-bank. At the root of a beech tree I found these bluebells blowing, and I thought how you always liked to wear flowers and might be glad to have them. My mother bids me to say, dear Mr Haco Spens, that she hopes you are not over-working yourself, and that everybody at Binkie will be anxious to see you come over looking well.—Your obedient, humble servant to command,

‘TIBBIE BAXTER.’

Haco picked up the bluebells, which had blown out of season, and though they were a little crushed he carefully placed them in a wineglass of water and put them on the mantelpiece. As he went into his

bedroom to get the glass, the sight of his own face rather frightened him. He was ghastly, and his hand shook, and he turned fearfully from his table, certain that the apparition was behind him. The poem he had come to his rooms with had vanished from his mind. It was quite wiped out, and instead of it was substituted that image of the rolling head and dislocated jaw. He felt very lonely and miserable that night, and was grateful to Mrs Ramsay for putting her head in at the door and asking him if there was anything she could do for him.

‘Dear me, Mr Spens! are you ill, sir?’ she asked, advancing into the room when she had scrutinized his white face.

‘I don’t know,’ said Haco. ‘I think I must be; but I’ll be all right when I’ve had a cigar.’

‘Let me make a little negus for you, sir,’ said the landlady, concluding that the youth had over-smoked himself.

‘No thank you.’

‘You’ll have to take good care of your health, sir. You mustn’t read so much. I had a gentleman, sir, here for two years, and he would do nothing but read read read—at his breakfast, at his dinner, at his supper, in his bed; and he grew till he was just like wax in the face, and he went into a decline, and they had to send him away to Australia, and he died.’

Mrs Ramsay wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, and though Haco couldn’t see any tears, he regarded her as a kind-hearted woman, who was talking for his good.

‘I shan’t read myself into my grave; don’t be afraid, Mrs Ramsay. But do you believe in ghosts? I am sure I saw a ghost to-night. I think it’s that makes you think I’m ill.’

‘Oh, such nonsense, sir!’

‘I don’t believe in ghosts a bit,’ said Haco, ‘but I have certainly seen one.’

He said it with such simple sincerity of belief that his landlady stared at him.

‘What was it like, sir?’

‘I would rather not describe it.’

‘It wasn’t your “wraith,” sir? Mr Spens you’re not very well, and you should speak to one of your professors or write to Sir Thomas, your father.’

Then, afraid that she might frighten the lucrative youth away, she added,

‘But at your time o’ life, sir, many’s the vision a young man sees. I’ll give you a fowl to your dinner to-morrow; It’ll be a change off what you’ve been getting—a fowl nicely stuffed and roasted. It’s your stomach, sir, I believe.’

Haco looked wearily at her, but she stood, arms a-kimbo, scrutinizing him.

‘I wouldn’t say there wasn’t such a thing as a ghost, sir; not I, indeed. When Mr Ramsay’s father died in the country, that same night there

came a chap, chap, chapping at the bedpost. And I said, "Father, stop that noise with your elbow." He was asleep—Mr Ramsay—and the chap, chap, chapping wakened him. "What's that?" he said, rising on his elbow; and the noise went on all the same. "Was it not you, father?" I said. "No," he answered, "it ~~wasn't~~ me! It's in the bedpost!" and there, sure enough, chap, chap, chapping, it went on, "Strike a light this moment, and read a verse out o' the bible," said I. And he struck a light, and that moment the chapping stopped. And what d'ye think? Next day we found that Mr Ramsay's father had died at half-past eleven o'clock the night before, to a minute, when the chap, chap, chapping was going on. And there's no explanation for that. That must have been the old man's ghost. It never came back after that night.'

'I hope my ghost may be as obliging,' said Haco with a ghastly effort at cheerfulness.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EXPLOSION

HACO was greatly troubled in his dreams that night by the ghastly vision which had wagged its head at him at the lamp-post. Usually, when he dreamt at Binkie, the tissue of his vision was sunlight and blue sky, the blue Firth, and white sails passing over it; but in his bed in Queen Street, and in the black solitude of the midnight, the class skeleton, on whose bony arm the professor of anatomy leant lovingly, as he pointed out the puzzle of its mechanism, came

down from the case on which it swung and visited him in his sleep.

‘I am he whom you have murdered,’ said the skeleton, dislocating its jaw, and lifting a menacing right arm. ‘This is what I have come to through you—hanging in a case for you to stare at; to have a clay pipe put into my lips, mocking my helplessness, whenever the professor’s back is turned. Come with me, young fellow; open that ante-room door, and spend the night in the dissecting-room. These motionless heaps upon the tables—what do you think of them? No, no, young fellow; no holding of your nose. Many a rosy youth has been here before you. But they come in the daylight, in bands of fifty, and they talk and laugh. *You* will have to come alone at midnight, with me to guide you, and ponder over the spectacle. Oh, you don’t like it, don’t you? No; they are not very communicative, these ones. They took all the spirit out of them

when they were alive, before they came here at all, and they are glad enough to pay no attention to anything now. It is different with me. I was robbed of my life in full career by you, Haco Spens, and some of it still adheres to these dry bones, and as long as there is left in my frame a memory of the injustice you have done me, I will come for you, and you will have to accompany me, whether you like it or not, to this jargon-tomb. No, no; don't you think that by passing on a few guineas by the hand of that good man, Roger Thorburn, to my poor wife and infants, that you have made amends for your behaviour. I will take the liberty, my noble young baronet, of walking arm-in-arm with you whenever I choose, and of paying you out for your recklessness.'

'I'm awfully sorry,' said Haco, trembling in his sleep, but unable to move a limb. 'But it

wasn't me who put the clay pipe in your jaws and a janitor's hat on your head.'

'You must bear the brunt of all their misdeeds,' said the skeleton; 'it matters not a finger-nail what *they* do. I've tried it on with some of them. But they won't see me. They sleep, and eat, and laugh, and talk, all the same. They won't consort with a skeleton on any terms. You *must*; you can't help yourself. And I advise you to see that I'm treated with more respect in that class-room, or you'll have some nice moonlight walks to take in my company.'

'I think it's rather mean of you,' moaned Haco, to take advantage of me in that way. You know it all happened by a mistake. Roger Thorburn understands that very well. And I'm sure, if it would please you, I would get my father to settle an annuity on Mrs Skeleton and the little Skeletons.'

'Ho! ho! ho!' laughed the skeleton, clattering

round the room, 'an annuity, indeed! You think you can get rid of me by an annuity! I tell you what it is, young fellow, if you mention a word of this to Sir Thomas, it's'—— and the skeleton drew a bone across its own throat, as if it were a fiddle which could play itself.

Then Haco awakened, and sat up and struck a light, and wondered whether he was really quite right in his head, that such persecuting images should pursue him. He was afraid to go asleep again; but, when he did sleep, he was untroubled by any more dreams.

On the following evening, however, he was determined to find out Sandy Baxter, and have a long talk about mutual experiences. He was sorry that Sandy had not already found him out, for he would like to have him coming to his rooms. As yet he had not been lonely or homesick, but he felt the necessity of exhibiting his

independent style of life to some other person than the self-invited Thorburn.

In the darkness of the Saturday night it was not so very easy to find Salisbury Street. Haco had to find his way through a labyrinth of narrow streets, in which there was more provision made for the passage of gutter than of human beings. The houses were high and the windows narrow. Up above, people could almost shake hands with each other across the street; but, to judge from the skirling overhead, they seemed to prefer to abuse each other, and, from the occasional fall of an onion or a potato at Haco's feet, they apparently enjoyed pelting each other with some of their Saturday night's provisions. Altogether, it was rather an exciting scene, lit up by the lurid red glare of flickering naphtha lamps, hung over street barrows, from which men with husky throats distributed their goods, while they roared a recommendation.

Haco had a 'great many enquiries to make before he reached Sandy's place and number; but, once arrived, he was shown to Sandy's door with much alacrity by the landlady. He thought the dark passage very like a dispensary, or a laboratory, or some of those places where bottles are gathered together in great quantities. The fumes were coming from Sandy's door; and, before entering, Haco heard Sandy's slow, precise, dogmatic voice explaining to some one:

'You see, at this point I'll have to be very careful. I told you that water is formed by the union of a gas called hydrogen with a gas called oxygen.'

'It's a mystery to me to understand how you get a haud o' your gases, besides give them names. Things that you cannot feel, much less see—puffs o' wind, and you give them as big a name as if they had the bulk o' an elephant.'

'Look out, now,' said Sandy; and as Haco

opened the door, a great explosion shook the room and made the windows rattle.

‘A paper pock’s naething to that,’ said the other speaker.

‘Mr Baxter, Mr Baxter, ye’ll hae us blawn ower Arthur’s Seat at thegither!’ said the landlady, following Haco into the room in alarm; while Sandy, the only perfectly cool one, kept his hand upon a battery, and said,

‘Oh, that’s nothing to speak of at all!’

‘Nothing!’ said Haco. ‘The one o’clock gun isn’t a patch upon it! Our chemistry professor would give his head to make an explosion like that. He’s always trying to make them, and he goes on for a quarter-of-an-hour at a time preparing the minds of his class for one; and then we all get our fingers in our ears—and bang! it’s only a whiff, with no sound in it at all. I’m awfully glad to see you, Sandy.’

The landlady, assured there was no danger in

the recent noise, went back to her kitchen, and Sandy introduced Haco to a tall man in a policeman's uniform.

'I never met a bobby in private life before,' said Haco, 'I may say it has been the dream of my youth to be introduced to a bobby. D'ye remember the fellow at Binkie village, Sandy, one dark night, when we were sliding down beside the pump, who chased me for a quarter-of-a-mile? Heavens! it was an awful sensation. I'll never forget, as long as I live, slipping in the middle of the road, and that giant looming over me, and taking out a notebook and putting in my name and asking who the other fellow was, and I said I wasn't sure, and he cried, "Wait till I get a haud o' him," and walked off.'

The policeman, who seemed not at all to object to being called a 'bobby,' smiled graciously, and said,

'He would just be warmin' himself wi' the run.'

'I never thought of that,' said Haco. 'What a lot of life you must see!'

'Oh, yes, we see plenty o' life in my beat, and death, too.'

'I would like to come round with you and see some of it,' remarked Haco. 'To-night, when I was coming down here, I could hardly get along for the mob shoving each other. Why are so many of them in rags, and so many of them drunk?'

'It beats me to say,' said the policeman. 'But I'll have to leave you.'

He went away, and Haco looked round Sandy's room. After his own extensive chambers, it seemed mean and choking enough. He asked if he might not open the window, and Sandy rushed to anticipate him.

'Upon my word that *is* a view!,' said Haco, leaning out and seeing the ribbed rocks.

'I have it for sixpence a week,' said Sandy, putting away his electrical apparatus and his

retorts into a box; 'But I don't find much time to look at it, and I've never been up yet to see the view from the crags.'

'I've been up twice,' said Haco, still at the window. 'It makes you feel like a bird being up so high. I wrote a description of it to father, but I don't think he cared much for it. He doesn't allude to it in his letters, anyhow.'

'He's so busy,' said Sandy.

'Yes; that's just what he said. And how are you getting on, Sandy? I've been longing to see you since that day at the hospital. I'm an awfully unfortunate fellow! D'you know, I'm pursued night and day by the vision of the poor man. He won't leave me. He came to me in my sleep in the character of the class skeleton and threatens me with all sorts of penalties. It's all very well to laugh, but it's just as real to me as sitting here talking to you. I sometimes think that's life and this is dreaming: the one makes more impression

on me than the other. Do you think many people know about it and talk about it, Sandy?’

‘The only fellow who would talk about it would be the house-surgeon, and he went away to India next day. You know, a hospital is a large town, and things of that sort are soon forgotten.’

‘Thorburn hasn’t forgotten it. I don’t like that fellow at all. I’m afraid he’s a cad, and yet he was very good to the poor man’s wife and children. I’ve been thinking I shall lay aside a third of my allowance to keep them out of trouble. Thorburn says he was a very respectable man, and earned good wages.’

‘He didn’t seem respectable to me,’ said Sandy, ‘and I think it’s hard lines to have to pay for an accident that I’m very sure killed the man before the chloroform touched him.’

‘But I’m such a coward,’ said Haco. ‘I’d rather pay than have a row made about it. Father gives me three hundred a year, you know,

and I can afford to give some of it away on charitable objects.'

'Three hundred a year!' said Sandy, looking at Haco as if he were Croesus himself. 'What a sum of money!' he continued, stirring his fire, with a frugal eye upon one large flame, which seemed inclined to burn a bit of coke rather rapidly.

'Now tell me about yourself, Sandy; how you are getting on, and how you like it, and what you think of Edinburgh, and whether you think being a doctor is such fun.'

'I think I've done very well to begin with,' said Sandy. 'Mr Dunn gave me letters'——

'The dominie?'

'Yes; he gave me three letters to schoolmasters in town, and I have five hours' teaching a day. It keeps me from taking the hospital this year, which is a pity; but I have the extra-mural all to myself. I get ten shillings a month for one hour, fifteen shillings a month for another hour, and a pound a

month for each of the three other hours a day. Of course I have to run about a good deal—all over Edinburgh, in fact—and the tramway fares come to something; but I believe I'll be able to take my mother's ten-pound note back to her at the end of the session.'

'How can you work with all that teaching?'

'Work!' said Sandy, passing his hand through his hair, while his eyes sparkled with pleasure. 'The running about helps me to sit down and get through at a rush. Then, you know, it's a great assistance to have a whole college to one's self, with distinguished professors. I have everything—absolutely everything—lectures, laboratories, dissecting-room—all to myself. I know as a fact, now, at the University there are not subjects for all the applicants.'

'Yes, thank Heaven!' said Haco, 'I shall have to wait till the end of the session before I can get a subject. I see you are as cold-blooded as the rest

of them, Sandy. They go into the place as if it were a butcher's shop.'

'No,' said Sandy, seriously. 'It cost me a great deal to begin the work. I had one day's serious illness; then I thought of the future, and now I like it—I positively like it. And they're complimenting me on the neatness of my fingers. Underhill says I'll be a demonstrator yet, if I hold on as I'm doing. I've really been very lucky.'

'Well, Sandy, it might come into your head to call upon a fellow, that's what I think. And I wish you would drop "Mr Haco." Call me Spens, as other fellows do. You're the cleverest man of the whole lot. *You'll* be a great surgeon, and no mistake about that. I see it in your face—yes, and richly you'll deserve to be it, too, working like a trooper. If I had all your knocking about, teaching, I should think I had done very well, without any more work. Have a cigar, Sandy?'

Haco took out his case and gave Sandy a cigar.

The latter had never smoked a cigar, though he had experimented with an ebony clay which belonged to his father. He took the cigar and lit it at the wrong end, and smoked it uncomfortably ; while Haco, with a superior air of familiarity with tobacco went on to say that he really felt rather jolly in Sandy's company, and he wasn't sure that he wouldn't settle down to his chemistry and anatomy, without thinking too much of the incident at the hospital.

CHAPTER IX

ELECTING THE LORD RECTOR

THE day arrived for voting a Lord Rector to the University. Christie called at Haco's rooms in the morning; expressed his satisfaction at their size and appearance; said Sir Thomas must allow him a huge quantity of 'tin' to buy such books as he had collected on his shelves; and walked arm-in-arm with him to the gates.

'When we have appointed him,' asked Haco, consequentially, 'what does he do?'

'I don't know that he does anything. He's a

sort of figure-head to the ship, you know. I don't know anything else he does, except make one speech. You were very sensible not to give your name to a canvasser.'

'I wish I felt as excited about it as that big fellow running round the quadrangle and picking out the first years, and following them to the classroom door.'

'Yes, he's pretty excited about it. You know, if he gets his man in, he'll have a letter from him in his own handwriting; it will appear in the newspapers; then, when the installation comes he'll stand up among the professors and invest him in his robes, and one half of the fellows will 'hoot' and 'boo' and another half will cheer and go on.'

'I hope his man won't get in.'

As yet there were not many students in the quadrangle; but as the morning advanced they were perceptibly increased, and a constant stream

of them passed out and in the rooms where the professors sat taking the poll.

Christie seemed to know and to be known by a great many of the students in all the faculties, and Haco felt quite honoured by being in his company. He was able to tell little stories about them, too, which Haco listened to with interest, as they walked round and round.

‘By the way,’ said Christie, as Thorburn passed and familiarly tipped off Haco’s hat with his stick, ‘you seem to be rather intimate with that fellow. I don’t understand it. I’ve seen him drunk in the middle of the day. He’s never out of Rutherford’s. He sat next me one day in the library, and went on telling the nastiest stories to the fellows all about. He knows too much. He borrowed half-a-crown before he left that day, and I heard the man who gave it him say, “Oh, he’s married; he needs it for his kids.” “D’ye mean to say he’s married?” I

asked. "Yes," said the fellow; "he married his landlady's daughter, and his father has stopped his allowance. He knows a lot about life." That's how they talk, Spens, some of these men. They think, if a fellow goes into Rutherford's and swigs beer in the middle of the day, and falls asleep at his lecture afterwards, that he knows life. That's why I object to your corner of the college. You are all so knowing, and have such a superior air about you. You haven't got it yet, Spens. I hope you won't cultivate it. Life, indeed! What do you know about the singing birds of the literary groves, and the philosophers, with their glorious puzzles about the universe? Come in with me some day and hear old Stewart give a lecture on myths, or history, or something, and see him gather his cloak about him. If I had my way, I would make every man in that corner go through old Stewart's hands before he was allowed to put

his nose in at a dissecting-room door. They should learn life first of all from the metaphysician, the historian, the critic, the poet, the star-gazer; then they might put on their aprons and profess to know life.'

'I say, Christie, you speak quite like an old fellow.'

'My father's living with me just now,' said Christie—'that's his view, too. Now, let's go together and vote for our man.'

They went in single file to Professor Stewart's room, who, though he took the poll, had his views about the Lord Rector, and, whenever a vote was given, exclaimed, 'Pshaw!' 'What!' 'Very good!' according to the candidate's name. 'I thought we could depend upon you, Christie. Spens, Spens, 'gurly grew the sea,' who are you voting for? That's right, man. Don't have any professional narrowness; vote for the best fellow. I expect to see you both at my house

to hear a little drama enacted. Don't wait for cards, but come. Next man—next man. Pshaw! Very good!'

By mid-day the first tickets of announcement were held over the balconies looking into the quadrangle, and it was seen that the couple of hours' polling was in favour of the lawyer, who led by some hundreds, the politician and the poet running each other close, though the poet was lowest on the list. It was something to be in the quadrangle at that moment.

There are various kinds of cheering—from the dusty rumble of elderly feet at a political meeting, to the invincible shout of a kilted division charging bayonets on a foreign slope.

The cheer of the quadrangle is different from either; it is a kind of choral riot of sound, an ebullition of aimless spontaneity which for freshness and stir cannot be matched. Before Haco knew what he was about, he was caught by an

eddy of a few hundred students, and swept down the steps into the body of the quadrangle.

Instinctively the three parties collected together, and in three masses began to dispute possession of the quadrangle. The voters of the poet were evidently in a miserable minority from the beginning. The voters of the lawyer and the politician were led by half-a-dozen lads with sticks, which rattled and smashed with the most ominous and menacing sound. The poets were not at first inclined to do anything but shout for their man; but the lawyers and politicians, thrusting their elbows into their sides, tilting their hats off, driving at them like rams, soon put them on the defensive at Brewster's statue, towards the inner end of the quadrangle.

It was then seen how few there were of them, and as a few tried to disengage themselves to go and vote, they were hemmed in upon the museum steps, and the balcony, the moving mass

below and round about them making derisive noises.

Haco's tall figure and shining hair were conspicuous among the battered minority, and presently he became the mark for an archery whose arrows were more miscellaneous than cleanly. A party of first years, who were unfavourable to the poet for a Lord Rector, formed themselves into a voluntary reserve of powder-monkeys, and passed in a continuous stream to neighbouring shops, where they filled their hats with peas, beans, and barley; made up paper bags of meal, flower, and bran; bought stale buns, scones, baps; carried off strings of red herrings, dry fish of various descriptions, and anything which seemed a promising and offensive enough missile.

Jammed up in their corner of the quadrangle, with half-a-dozen rows of bristling sticks in front of them, the supporters of the poet had

no means of defending themselves when they were put under fire.

The peas were amusing enough, falling around them like the pellets of an Arctic shower driven by a fierce north wind. Nobody minded them. But when it came to red herrings flopping against their hats and tumbling from the side of the statue, and when the walls round them were whitened with flour-bags and the air became thick with the dust of the mill, it became too uncomfortable to bear.

Haco was the centre for a good many of the missiles, and was gradually transformed from his fine aspect into the cowering image of an old Father Christmas ; for the bags of flour broke all over him, and made him white from top to toe. Even that he would have stood patiently ; but when a red herring, aimed with diabolical precision, hit him between the eyes and left him blinking painfully, with an odour of stale brine

getting into his nostrils, he felt that it was time to stand it no longer. The shot was greeted with maniacal shouts of laughter and clatter of sticks, until, turning at the statue and facing the supporters of the poet, Haco called out,

‘Follow! charge! “Up, guards, and at ’em!”’

There was a little surprise just at first, down in the quadrangle, at the attitude of the lithe stooping fellow, with the powdered hair and herring score across his face, which soon became amazement, as, sweeping down the steps, with his stick brandished over his head, he charged into the politicians and lawyers, closely followed by the besieged minority. The powder-monkeys from the rear of the mass darkened the air with groceries, and made it difficult work for the poet’s voters; but, by gathering into a close-packed phalanx, and advancing shoulder to shoulder, they firmly put down the opposing sticks, cut a way for themselves through their opponents, and steadily marched to

a position beneath the placard, where Haco, taking off his hat, led the cheering round to the poet once more. The minority never seemed so much of a minority as at that moment, and the quadrangle soon became alive to the absurdity of its defeat; for gathering again in the neighbourhood of the statue, a great, shouting mass swept down upon the phalanx with irresistible force, and carried it, broken and defeated, out of the University gates into the street.

‘The street for the poets! the street for the poets!’ was the shout raised inside the gates; and the street they got, that busy arena of rushing cabs, omnibuses, drays, and carriages soon filling up with the scrambling hundreds. The powder-monkeys were now in a position to use their groceries with more effect; for, being outside the University, and having no fear of watchful janitors before their eyes, they hurled their missiles at the shop windows, at which there was presently a

great crashing and tinkling of glass. When the shutters were put up, the powder-monkeys only aimed a storey higher, and broke windows in the houses above the shops; and cabs, omnibuses, drays, and carriages had to find their way to their destination by another route.

Haco, pushed out into the street, and to the outer edge of the surging crowd, had time to look at himself, and to feel that he was not adorned as he would like his friends to see him. All his theories of beauty were roughly put to flight. He stood looking from the scrimmage to his whitened and dishevelled self, and it was only when a grey-headed loungeur in a broad Doric remarked to him from a shop-door, 'Never heed the dirt, man. Gang back and put your man at the top o' the poll. The dirt'll a' wash off,' that he felt it mattered less than it looked.

During the afternoon the poet's contingent was thrice chased from the University, and all voting

for a poetical Lord Rector came to an end. The politicians then fell upon the lawyers, and a good deal of hard mauling was done till the poll was finally counted and the winning ticket hung out.

‘The lawyer has it! The lawyer has it!’ rang round the quadrangle; and amidst cheers, counter cheers, groceries, and waving of sticks, Haco found himself again in the street.

He looked for Christie, but could not find him; but at the corner of a street leading to the Infirmary he saw Lady Mary Hay’s carriage standing. Lady Mary was looking anxiously out of it, and seeing him, she called him to her.

‘Haco,’ she said, ‘is it all over?’

‘Yes; the lawyer has won. He is hundreds and hundreds above the poet! The politician was not far behind.’

‘Who did you vote for, Haco?’

‘For the poet.’

‘Did you vote in a bakehouse?’

‘No ; this is the stuff they threw about.’

‘You won’t like to go down the Bridges in that condition. I will drive you down.’

‘No, thanks, Lady Mary ; I would be too utterly disreputable. I will take a cab, I think.’

‘Haco, there is again a vacancy in our ward. Dr Crum expects you to take it. You will probably hear from him about it.’

‘Good-bye,’ said Haco, running off to catch a cab, leaving the electoral roar of the college behind him.

CHAPTER X

IN THE WARDS

A YOUNG fellow's object, when he is at college, is, or ought to be, to get a degree; and if he would have a degree he must scorn delights and lead laborious days. He mustn't waken in the morning, and, feeling the keen edge of the frosty atmosphere, turn over in bed, saying to himself, 'Oh, it doesn't matter to-day. I don't need to mind that bone class. He's going to demonstrate the hands and feet to-day. These little bones are contemptibly easy. I know them already'—snore. He shouldn't, when he is in his class-room, and when the pro-

fessor is pounding along, addict himself to sketching the attitudes of the lecturer, while he wears an expression on his own face of being deeply engaged in taking notes. He shouldn't, when he ought to be attending a lecture, sit in the college library reading funny stories lent out to him, with a 'humph' and a suspicious look, by the attendant of that department. Because it is not always possible to tell when a professor will call over his roll, or ask cards to be taken at the door. And having called cards in the absence of the student, it is doubtful whether the student is justified in giving the janitor a shilling at the door to take his card, as if he had been inside. No doubt, scores of fellows do it, and the class-janitor, being an honest old soldier who has served his country at Balaclava or Tel-el-Kebir, and who wears a medal, perhaps, on his breast, for life risked and enemy's blood spilt, pockets the shilling, and feels that he is only supplementing an inadequate income.

Yet it is not precisely the way to arrive at the mystic letters which entitle a man, by-and-bye, to roll about a town in a carriage, step down at a score of doors, and with the demeanour of a Lord Chancellor, feel pulses, call out for paper and ink, inscribe hieroglyphics, and roll away again. He shouldn't; but, as yet, Haco had adopted none of these current courses, except, perhaps, omitting an early and chilly bone class, so that he might have another hour's sleep in the morning. He had not bribed janitors, or caricatured lecturers, or read funny stories in the library, when he should have been elsewhere and more seriously engaged. But he had allowed himself to be much elsewhere in his thoughts when the professor was talking. He had been many a time in the garden at Binkie, looking out on the chocolate-hued sails of the rushing boats, as they cleared their way towards the Bass Rock and beyond; many a time lying on his back

in his little sloop, with the anchor out, and Sandy Baxter at the bow, pulling in his lines with the cry, 'A bite—a bite;' sometimes inside the little parish church, alone in the pew which his father never frequented, while he exchanged glances with pretty Bell Logan, or watched the swallows fly up to the eaves.

Ever a dreamer, Haco often lost himself in memories, when he should have been listening to the building of the spinal column, or to the chemical constitution of the atmosphere.

It happened, however, that a great whale had run himself ashore at a point of the coast not far distant from Binkie, and the professor had spent laborious weeks inside him, catching colds and scorning them, until he had noted the shape of every bone, and the course of every nerve, and muscle, and artery; and as he was continually alluding to the great whale, Haco was often led

away to scenes which he could not immediately forsake for the lecture.

Being a dresser in the ward of an infirmary, however, does not admit of dreaming, and a couple of mornings after the voting for the Lord Rector, Haco found a note on his table from Dr Crum.

‘For some reason or other,’ said the note, ‘you dropped your dressership on the last occasion you got one. I am led to understand by Lady Mary Hay that it was an accident. From a letter I have received from Sir Thomas Spens, I judge that he wishes you to be in the wards. I have made a vacancy for you, and will expect to see you at work this week.’

Haco had been delighted to avoid the work of the dissecting-room; he hated the prospect of assisting at the operating theatre of the hospital; but Lady Mary’s ward had no terrors for him. It was currently understood that Dr

Crum made it as easy work for her ladyship as possible. All the nice little boys, who knew how to behave themselves under pain, were sent to the ward where she was. All the little girls who might be expected to look 'nice' under any torture were, by the tacit understanding of the receiving-room, given to Lady Mary. It was a ward in which the best behaviour prevailed, and Haco, being introduced to his work by Lady Mary, found that notwithstanding his nervousness at the sight of the bottles, he could do a great many little offices with instinctive correctness.

'What am I to do first?' asked Haco of Lady Mary, as he found her dressed in her nun-like robes in the ante-room off the ward.

'Dr Crum will tell you; but you will have to exercise great tact in asking questions. He comes in often from a serious operation, and he is apt to explode if he is not approached in the right way. He has a magnificent, wild temper,

and the kindest of hearts. He is often very much worried, especially if he meets Dr Dale in the passages. Dr Dale, you know—who is also the best of men—believes in the application to wounds of a different kind of lotion from that which Dr Crum would apply. He believes in germs in the air which have to be killed at operations by the dissemination of a fine spray. Dr Crum laughs at the germs, and thinks a knife and plenty of cold water all that is wanted. And these noble, self-sacrificing men, who do more for their fellow-creatures than any of us, when they meet each other in the passages, snort like horses, and write about each other as a shallow and incompetent nincompoop on the one hand, and as a physiological maniac on the other. Dr Dale hints that Dr Crum is a butcher; and Dr Crum insinuates that Dr Dale is an undertaker in disguise, who gets a percentage on his—— Ah, well, it's very sad. But you had

better not mention Dr Dale in Dr Crum's hearing. His system is not tolerated in this ward.'

'Why do men go on like that?' asked Haco.

'I suppose because they are not women,' said Lady Mary, opening her ante-room door and conducting Haco into the ward.

It was a lofty room, containing twenty beds, each bed having a small patient at one or other stage of convalescence or decline. There was a little buzz of conversation going on, varied by a cough in a corner, or a moan, or a little sigh.

When Lady Mary entered, every patient turned, or tried to turn, his or her head towards her. She advanced to a table spread with lint, bottles of Condyl's fluid, and what not, Haco following her.

'Now, Haco,' she said, 'your first duty will be to learn what to do with one of these'—handing him a bandage.

'You see this little hero sitting by the fireside

sucking his thumbs. He *would* run after cabs in the street, and of course fell and broke his left arm, and has to sit here all day. You like it, do you? Well, you are a brave little fellow. And, Haco, you see how his arm is suspended; you will have to learn how to prepare bandages like that. And like that,' continued Lady Mary, leading him to a little crib, where a girl wore a crown of bandages, and to another and another, where the bandages grasped a limb in serpentine folds or lay easily on it.

At one of the beds Haco was much taken with the appearance of a little fellow, who seemed to be about four years of age. He lay quite silent, looking up with a heavy, pained expression in his eyes, and Haco, glancing at a ticket above his bed, saw that he was suffering from a scalded limb. He had been helping himself to a potato in his mother's kitchen, Lady Mary said, and

had brought the pot down upon himself and burnt one of his small legs shockingly,

‘You will have to dress him, Haco,’ said Lady Mary; ‘there are no bandages required for him—only soft dressing and oil. He is doing very well, poor little man; but he doesn’t feel inclined to say much.’

‘What is your name?’ asked Haco, bending over him.

‘Thorburn,’ said the boy, wearily, taking his hands from beneath a coverlet and rubbing his eyes.

‘Thorburn!’ said Haco, straightening himself, and looking at the ticket with a feeling of revulsion for a name which called up so many disagreeable associations.

Yet the helpless little boy, with his expression of quiet resignation, touched him, though he allowed his imagination to run so far away with him as to think he saw in him a likeness

to that other Thorburn with whom he had unpleasant dealings.

The more he looked at the boy, the more he thought he detected a resemblance.

‘What is your father?’ he asked.

But the boy only shook his head pitifully, intimating that he didn’t know.

‘Do you like toys?’ Haco next asked—‘jumping-jacks, spring-frogs, or horses best?’

He would like, he said, a spring-frog, and if it jumped as high as the roof, so much the better.

Then Dr Crum came in, and the next hour was spent in following him from bed to bed—a crowd of twenty students peering over each other’s shoulders, and putting into note-books what they heard him say.

Haco was not able to give much attention to Dr Crum, because he saw Thorburn enter; and the burnt child, seeing him at the same time, stretched

out his hands and gave a look of unmistakeable recognition, which Thorburn as unmistakeably repudiated.

Could it be possible, thought Haco, that this was a son of Thorburn's; that he was really married, as Christie had said; and that——

A great many new notions were suggested to him by the situation.

CHAPTER XI

AN EXAMINATION

A WOMAN came next day and carried off the little boy in a shawl, so that Haco had no further opportunity of seeing him. He began to like his dressership, however, and he had not been long in the ward before he had planned a series of new pictures for the walls, and introduced quite a variety of toys. He told Lady Mary that at Binkie there were hosts of things for which he had not the slightest use—niggers playing upon drums, soldiers prancing upon horses, with swords drawn,

indiarubber cats which could mew, arks with all the new beasts which had been discovered since Noah's time—and Lady Mary said that they would be a great acquisition to the ward. Accordingly he sent to the housekeeper at Binkie for them, and she having consulted Sir Thomas, he briefly dismissed the subject with a 'Toys for the children—eh? eh? Oh, yes, by all means.'

The distribution of them in the ward was followed by so much crowing and laughter and holding up for comparison between bed and bed, that Haco felt he had really done one of the most meritorious things in his life. It would have been well for him had he been as successful at his books as in the impression he made among Lady Mary's infants, for the first examination for class honours was coming on, without much preparation for it on Haco's part. It was not that Haco was constitutionally indolent. He was really rather busy than otherwise, but he was busy at the wrong places

and the wrong time. To be able to sit down at a class examination, and to be prepared to answer all the questions a professor puts from the course of his delivered lectures, it requires a student to read night by night what he has taken down in his note-books, besides following the text-books over the same ground. Now Haco's imagination was so filled with the unpleasant vision of the skeleton, that he postponed to the last reading about the bones of which his invisible tormentor was composed.

The night before the examination Sandy Baxter came in on him, having the day before had his class examination at the extra-mural. He had been told that out of a hundred possible marks for his paper, he had scored ninety-two in chemistry and ninety-eight in anatomy, and he was in great glee over the announcement. Haco shook hands with him and congratulated him on his success.

‘Why, Sandy,’ he said, sorrowfully, ‘you will be going home at the end of the session loaded with honour, and I shall have been nothing but a disgrace. I told you father allowed me six pounds a week. Well, do you know, I am falling behind terribly. I have been obliged to make an arrangement with Thorburn to give him a couple of my six pounds for you know what, and, upon my word, I don’t find the other four much help in getting through the week. To be sure, Mrs Ramsay says, “Oh, it doesn’t matter falling behind a little.” Only I can tell you I don’t like it.’

‘Haco, if you take my advice, you’ll write your father at once about this, and tell him everything. He will soon put a stop to Thorburn getting two of your pounds every week from you. It’s a beastly imposition. I am as sure as I am of my own life that you didn’t kill that fellow on the table. D’ye know I saw a man awfully like him quite close to Salisbury Square under a lamp-post. I

went up to him and looked into his face and he sneaked off.'

The information did not seem to cheer Haco much. He only replied,

'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy, Sandy. I don't believe in ghosts, but I sometimes see them. I believe the spirit of that poor fellow is knocking about Edinburgh. For that matter of it, I think—well, I won't say what I think; but let me hear what sort of questions they put to you at the extra-mural. I suppose anatomy there is just like anatomy here with us—the same kind of nomenclature and all that.'

'Oh, yes, just the same,' said Sandy. 'You don't keep bones in your room? I could go over them better if I had them. I have a set in my room in a box under my bed.'

Haco shuddered.

'You talk, Sandy, as if bones were manufactured to order for us fellows to demonstrate on.'

'So they are; at least they are polished and cleaned. They don't offend me. How can you understand man at all, if you don't know his texture?'

'Go on, then, Sandy.' And Sandy, without the bones, but aided by an expensive volume of luxurious engravings, handed him by Haco, demonstrated all he knew in a slow, professional key.

'Sandy,' said Haco, yawning, after half-an-hour of it, 'you're without exception the ablest fellow that ever lived.'

Sandy ignored the yawn, and his own enthusiasm for his subject being thoroughly roused, he kept on at it for another quarter of an hour, Haco little by little losing all consciousness of the subject as he stared into the fire and imagined himself in his yacht scudding out

of the Firth, with a jib and foresail and a main-sail bellying to the wind.

‘Joiner’s not a bit better at it than you, Sandy,’ said Haco, realizing suddenly that Sandy had stopped demonstrating, and that something was expected of him in reply. ‘If you go on like this, you will be a professor yourself.’

‘I’ll be an assistant, anyhow, in a year or two,’ said Sandy, rubbing his hands with the glowing satisfaction of knowledge present and knowledge to come. ‘It’s splendid,’ he said, bringing his right and left foot together, with his toe at a mark on the carpet, and leaping over the seat of a chair.

‘I can’t demonstrate as well as you, Sandy, but I can fly higher than that,’ said Haco, bringing his toes and heels together in the same way, and taking a high leap over a footstool and a pile of books he had placed upon the seat. To which Sandy responded by

putting more books on the top of these and leaping again, with the result that he brought books, footstool, chair, and self upon the floor with a thud, which made the substantial furniture vibrate, and brought Mrs Ramsay in to see what her lodgers were doing.

‘Oh, go about your business, Mrs Ramsay. It’s nothing,’ said Haco, preparing another leap, while Sandy rubbed his knees and looked ruefully at the female in the doorway.

‘I’ll better lay the cloth,’ said Mrs Ramsay, as Haco leapt over the barrier which had brought Sandy to the ground.

‘Hurrah!’ cried Haco. ‘I can do it higher than you.’

‘Dear me, Mr Spens! you’re very wild to-night, sir. You’ll have Mr Phin, the solicitor, up, with the floor shaking above his head. He’s been up here before, I’m sorry to say, and threatened to take the law of me if I kept so

disorderly a house—he has, indeed. Will I lay down a box of sardines, sir, for your supper, and some of your father's old wine?’

And the pair sat down to supper, Haco feeling that he was fully equipped for his examinations on the morrow. He had not the least doubt as he entered the University gates and ascended the stair to the class-room where the examinations were to be held, that he would stand at least as well as Sandy at the extra-mural. For Sandy had no magnificent volumes of engravings, had only a fifth of the time at his disposal to prepare for examination, and, as Haco knew, had no mental advantages over himself.

The first college examination was a very solemn occasion. It always is in the life of a young man who aspires to be a first-class citizen later on. Or, if the young man does not look so far ahead as that, but only thinks of the precious bronze medal which at the end of the session, reposing in its

morocco case and satin cushion, may become his if he be persevering, it is still a solemn occasion. What applause of his domestic circle will he not have, if the thing in bronze becomes legitimately his! How his father, if he have one alive, will look at the solid reward of merit and dole out his praise with judicious niggardliness and a flavour of warning not to be puffed up! How his mother, who is sure to be alive, will stand over the precious token of genius with uplifted hands at a table, and say, 'Oh, John!' 'Oh, Peter!' or whatever his name may be, with a rapture of maternal affection! How the sisters and little brothers will run among their friends bragging and giving themselves airs, and comparing Peter or John's magnificent genius with the ineffectiveness of poor Donald from the same parish, who working at the same examinations, has come back with nothing but a scrap of paper intimating his regular attendance!

Haco had certain previsions of the glory of the

thing as he ascended to the class-room. He knew his father would be very glad to hear of a medal. He felt that Lady Mary's eyes would brighten on him if he were to take it. He knew that he ought, as the son of an illustrious surgeon to stand at the head of his list; and it was with a look of bright exultation on his face that he took his place in the class-room waiting for the giving out of the paper of inquiries. It struck Haco as a curious circumstance that only about half the class was present. He had met a student at the gates who had said to him :

'I say, Spens, you are not such a fool as to go to a class-examination? What good does it do? A lot of bother for nothing. You're not obliged to go to it. Come away over and get a glass of beer.'

That explained why there were so few in the room compared to the size of the class. They were not obliged to be there, unless when conscience pricked them. Nothing depended on it at pro-

fessional examinations for their degrees. It only mattered so far as the honours for the reading of the session were concerned.

Haco felt rather virtuous as he compared himself with the men outside who would not subject themselves to examination, and he took up his paper with a trembling eagerness which should have been seconded with something else than an instantaneous feeling of despair. Despair, however, it was which took possession of him, as he handled the little pile of bones at his elbow, and the paper of questions about them which he was asked to answer. He had, curiously enough, omitted to go to his bone class just on the days when the hand, the ear, and the nose, were being explained, and here were the bones of the hand, the ear, and the nose, the only bones the professor put questions about. It was too bad of him, Haco thought. If he had only asked about the big bones of the leg, he would have told him, or about the backbone

itself, but these bones! It was some little consolation to him to see about a score of men rise at once from their desks and make pantomimic gestures with their papers as they went out, without attempting to answer anything. It was also consoling to hear their horse-laughter and derision at the door. Surely the professor must see that he was putting questions of an absurd sort. But no; the professor sat at the foot of the class skeleton with a look of impenetrable unconcern. They might, apparently, go or come, write it or leave it, for all that it concerned him. Haco hated him at that moment, as he sat chewing the end of his pencil, glancing from row to row of men similarly engaged. At least half the competitors he saw were in the same condition of vacuity with himself.

There were, however, about half-a-dozen white-faced men, hard at work with their pens, down in the neighbourhood of the professor. As the minutes flew by, and their pens increased their

velocity, Haco could not but feel how objectionable they were; so eager, so well-informed, so obviously making for the medal with sure and swift strides! There were others in the room who seemed to be making good papers, too, notably one student right in front of Haco, whose finger-nails were a very encyclopædia of information, which, as he utilized it, nail after nail, he sucked off. He was more amusing than the earnest, well-informed ones, because Haco saw that he did not know much more than his nails contained, from the way he turned the whites of his eyes to the ceiling every now and then. He liked the men less to the right and left of him, who took out diagrams of the ear, and the hand, and the nose, with the anatomical names of the different holes and corners in the bones, and who laboriously copied them on to their sheets of paper.

‘After all,’ thought Haco, ‘one of these fellows

may get the medal. If so, I shan't care. I shouldn't have it on these terms.'

But it amused him all the same, even in spite of himself, when the professor retired to his ante-room for a little, to see how many of the disgusted competitors on the back benches chewed their papers, and, having made them exceedingly pulpy and disagreeable, addressed them with great precision, in the form of soft balls, at the indomitable six who went on writing as if for life.

Altogether, it was not a successful examination for Haco; for, having sat for an hour his head between his hands and his elbows on the desk, wondering how many ghosts there might be standing round belonging to the fragments he was expected to describe, he rose suddenly, abandoned his pens, ink, paper, and questions, and rushed into the quadrangle.

CHAPTER XII

DESPAIR

HACO had never as yet, out of home-sickness, gone up to the Mons Meg corner of the Castle, to see Binkie Manor in the distance. After the examination, however, he found his way there. He went up and sat on the parapet of the highest battery, and looked out over the gardens and squares, and had a very miserable half-hour, with nothing in the horizon to comfort him. He wondered, for a little, if, with all the anxieties and disappointments which had come to him, it

would not be well to throw himself over the crag. If he shut his eyes, he thought, and delivered himself into the air, launching himself right down so as to fall at the foot when a train was running past, there would then be an end of him.

What between the skeleton, the anxiety, the examination papers he had not been able to answer, he began to feel that there was no use in being alive. Evidently it was a world of persecution and misfortune, and he was to have a larger share of it than he had expected. If he could only be sure that launching himself into the air would be accompanied by instantaneous death! But then it mightn't. He might only break a leg, or crack his skull, and linger on for years a poor incurable, beyond his own father's skill to heal. Life was better than that.

A soldier, who was off duty, presently lounged round to him where he was sitting, and began to converse. He had been in the castle, he said,

for six months, and hoped to be in it as long again, for he had been at the wars, and was rather sick of them.

‘Been at the wars!’ said Haco, leaning across the muzzle of a gun, and looking up at the warrior. ‘Have you ever killed a man?’

He was not a very tall soldier, but he had a moustache which gave such an expression of ferocity to his face that it seemed altogether unnecessary to ask whether he had ever killed anybody. There was a sentry pacing up and down, and the soldier, when he had paced to the furthest end of his beat away from them, leant down and ejaculated, giving a turn of his wrists and elbows as if he were manipulating a bayonet,

‘Dozens of ’em.’

‘Don’t they lie on your mind?’ asked Haco.

‘No,’ said the soldier; ‘they lie in the bush of Kaffir-land, to the best of my knowledge.’

‘Do they never revisit you in your sleep?’

‘Re-what me in my sleep! Bless you! they were niggers—were black chaps, with no souls in their body to speak of. A black chap hasn’t as much ghost as would carry him this distance. Besides, ain’t I a sodger? Will you tell me why they should lie on my mind? Ain’t I paid to kill ’em?’

And the red lounge twirled the corner of his moustache in an argumentative way.

‘Yes, of course; but I should have thought that a man of fine feeling, you know, would be rather sorry, after it was all over, that he had been obliged to kill other men, even in battle.’

‘A man of fine feeling might; but, then, I ain’t. I like killin’ ’em. What’s tiger-shootin’ to it, will you tell me? What’s a go on the moor to it, will you oblige me by sayin’? I say to you, sir, that puttin’ a bayonet into the vital part of a fellow, who would put a spear into the vital part of you if he could, is—ah! there ain’t a sensation in life like

it, not one, as long as it's on you, and you see everything red all round you—crimson red—fiery crimson red—spouts and spurts and fountains of it.'

'I have seen it,' said Haco. 'I am studying medicine. I don't like it.'

'Oh, you *think* you don't like it, but you do. Haven't I seen 'em at it?—the surgeons whippin' off hands and arms and toes and legs, and enjoyin' it, too. Just like we do. It's in us. It's a devourin' passion. We must have our red hours.'

'What a ferocious fellow you are!' said Haco, still leaning on the gun and looking into the soldier's face.

'No, I ain't; no more than any other sort o' man. We're all alike; there's a brute in us all as bloody as a tiger, and he wants the taste and the smell of blood.'

'Fee-fi-fo-fum,' said Haco, rising. 'I don't be-

lieve you're half such a bloodthirsty fellow as you say you are.'

'Thank ye, sir,' responded the loungee, taking the price of a quart of beer for his communications, and walking off as if nothing had occurred.

Haco sat down on the gun again and looked at the city. His misery came back upon him. As he looked in the direction of Binkie, he thought with anguish and trembling of what his father would say to him when he went back, without certificate, and with a load of trouble on his shoulders. He believed that he would never speak to him again in a friendly way. He might cut him off with that impecunious shilling he had so often heard of, and what could he do with it? 'List,' a voice seemed to whisper to him—'list, and go abroad, and manipulate a bayonet, and come back with a bushy moustache, a pair of glaring eyes, and sumptuous memories of blood.' There was a little consolation in the fact that he might go back upon the

army if his father were quite too hard upon him. It was a something between him and the necessity of yielding to such a temptation as that of throwing himself over a cliff. Yes, he might 'list. The army was always there; and the army meant change of scene, adventure, a life of unknown deeds. He was a little grateful to the sanguinary soldier as he rose and turned to go down the Castle

On the Mound, as he crossed to Princes Street, he overtook a figure, whom, from the back, he seemed to know. The figure swung from side to side, and walked with a great width of stride, and he was accompanied by Sandy Baxter. When Haco overtook him, he saw that it was Sandy Baxter's father.

The first sensation he had was of warm gratitude for the sight of his homely face, and he shook hands with him cordially; and it amused him to see the father's astonishment when Sandy said, 'How are you, Spens?'

He had a good many questions to ask the grieve about Binkie, all of which were answered with more or less ignorance, when an embarrassing moment occurred. The grieve opened a paper bag, took out a mutton pie, still steaming, which he proceeded to eat as they sauntered along Princes Street.

At that hour of the day Princes Street is the Champs Elysées, or Rotten Row, or Phoenix Park, where fashion is airing itself on wheels. The difference is that in Princes Street fashion airs itself on its legs, so that dandiacal bodies have more time to stare at each other and to note what they are severally wearing and how they are wearing it. And here was the good grieve, with his mutton pie in his hand, biting away at it, and letting drops of gravy fall upon the pavement, to the great delight of a couple of street dogs, who, with protruding tongues, followed close at his back.

‘I must confess it to you, Mr Haco, that I find

a mutton pie a great relish to a visit to the metropolis,' he said, finishing one and extracting another, while he held out the bag to Sandy and Haco in turn.

Haco felt very uncomfortable, and suggested that it might be as well to go inside an eating house. But no, Mr Baxter would have no eating house. A pie in the open air had especial charms of its own for him.

'What a boarding-schools there are now!' he ejaculated, as a row of twenty fresh-faced misses, tittering as they went, looked from the discomfited face of Haco to the gradually-diminishing pie.

'That would be a professor you bowed to just now,' he continued, as Dr Crum passed at a rapid pace and took in the pie with a corner of his glance.

'Yes, that was a professor,' said Haco, despairingly, as he saw that the bag contained still another savoury article.

'They're a laughing, hearty kind of people,' remarked the grieve, unconscious of his own peculiar appearance being the cause of merriment in others.

'Why, here is Lady Mary Hay,' said Haco, 'coming out of her carriage.'

'How do you do, Haco?' said Lady Mary, looking at the grieve and the pie, and remembering Sandy Baxter's face from the day of the chloroform operation, and saying, 'I remember your friend, Haco.'

'This is his father. He is having a mutton pie as he goes along. Lady Mary Hay — Mr Baxter.'

'Od's sake, the Earl of Strawfield's sister!' said the grieve, looking at Sandy touching his hat to her without a symptom of bashfulness, and dropping his pie, to the great delight of the dogs, who bolted with it in halves, and to the relief of Haco.

‘This is my father’s steward,’ said Haco.

‘Ah,’ replied Lady Mary ‘You have not forgotten Professor Stewart’s evening? He is bringing out a play in his drawing-room. You will be sure to come and see it?’

‘Certain to,’ said Haco, letting her pass to a shop-door.

‘Ay, man,’ said the grieve, ‘and that’s the Earl o’ Strawfield’s sister! Od’s sake, I do *not* know what the world’s comin’ to. They tykes hae run away wi’ my pie.’

CHAPTER XIII

ROGER THORBURN AT HOME

THE spider to whom Haco Spens had so unwittingly become a fly lived inside a 'close,' otherwise a narrow, dark passage leading from the Canongate. At the mouth of the close there was usually a crowd of round-jawed men, with white moleskin jackets and tattered trousers, talking to harridans in scarlet shawls.

Entering the passage, a window was discernible with bottles of coloured water in it, and bunches of dried grass, and handfuls of senna leaves.

Behind the bottles, upon a cross slab of glass, there were emblazoned the words, 'Roger Thorburn, LL.D., M.D.'

Thorburn had promoted himself since we last saw him in Haco's rooms. He had executed his threat, and, by an expenditure of a few pounds, had obtained from Jersey a couple of degrees duly qualifying him to practise his profession wherever he might choose to settle. He had his degrees mounted on rollers, and hung them on the wall of his surgery; a room within, or behind, the room where the arrays of bottles stood out in every variety of shape and hue.

After the damp, subterranean feeling of the close, which seemed to open into a gaping chasm of noisy blackness beyond, any one who lifted the latch of the shop door was entitled to feel the contrast of light and warmth a little cheerful. A rickety individual who had slipped in from the noise and elbowing of the street, and

who stood outside the counter of the shop, gazing with open mouth from shelf to shelf, seemed to feel it. It was a disagreeable winter night, and the individual was cold. His nose was blue, and he rubbed it with the back of his hand. His head dangled on his neck, and he shivered while he waited for Roger Thorburn, LL.D., to come to him. He had no overcoat, and his threadbare jacket glistened with the effects of the rain, which had beat upon it all the evening, to judge from the damp shine upon it. Never did human being—if it were human—look so much in need of the prompt attendance of a doctor. Yet, as he shivered at the counter, and rapped on it with his blue knuckles, and craned his neck to look in at the open door of the surgery, and stamped his feet and yawned, and finally called ‘Doctor! doctor!’ no one paid any attention to him. Thorburn was sitting out of sight in the surgery, toasting a bit of cheese. The cheese had softened

and passed from the frizzly condition into crisp brown, and the LL.D. was contemplating it with a fixed look of animal delight, when he heard his name called.

‘That’s a fellow with asthma,’ reflected the LL.D. ‘Asthma—asthma, what’s the prescription for asthma? Come down, Buchan, and let me see. After all, Buchan, there’s as much in you as in a whole college course. Give me Buchan and the Jersey degree, and what more do I want?’

‘Doctor! doctor!’ cried the wheezy voice at the counter.

‘I wonder what he’s like,’ pursued the LL.D. ‘If he’s good for a shilling down, I’ll charge him a shilling. I’ll give him a little coloured water, and charge him a shilling. It’s worth that for the sealing-wax I’ll put on it, and the green twine. But I may as well have a look at him.’

He rose and peered through a scratch at a blind window, and saw his friend the skeleton,

who had been chloroformed by Haco Spens, and who had subsequently risen and walked out of the hospital arm in arm with himself.

‘It’s that ass, is it?’ said Roger, returning to his chair. ‘Big fleas,’ he hummed, ‘have little fleas upon their backs to bite ’em, and these fleas have other fleas, and so on, *ad infinitum*. This big flea must swallow his cheese before the Snake gets a smell of it.’

And, without further ado, he turned his cheese down on a slice of toast and commenced munching it, never stopping till it had all disappeared, when he lifted a smoking-cap from a table, put it on his head, lit a pipe, and without rising, exclaimed,

‘Snake, Snake, you may come in. I thought you were a shilling’s worth.’

The rickety individual entered the surgery, and, cold though he was, he made four rapid movements of dislocation to warm himself. He threw his head

off his shoulder, he jerked his right leg out of its socket, he broke his back, and dangled his hands.

‘Enough o’ that, now, Snake; you’re throwing the damp about too much for my taste. What brings you here to-night? Why are you not exercising your profession at the penny gaff? Ah, Snake, a man with your talents need never have left the circus. You might have been goin’ round the capitals of Europe making crowned heads stare. The Emperor of Germany would have been asking you to dine with him, and the Czar of Russia would have been introducing you to his nursery to break your back for the children to laugh at, if you had only been steady.’

The Snake took the compliment without much visible alteration of features; indeed, his face seemed incapable of much alteration of any kind, preserving, as it did, a fixed look of vacancy, as if prolonged suppression of astonishment at his own feats had robbed him of the power of expression.

‘Yes, I’m the only contortionist,’ he said, wheezingly, glancing round the room and drawing a chair towards the fire.

‘I never invited you to sit down, Snake, and if my wife catches a sight of you, she’ll hit you with a broom. She doesn’t like you, my wife doesn’t; she has a prejudice against snakes.’

The Snake looked round the room timidly, bent a listening ear in the direction of a green-baize door communicating with an inner passage, along which there was a distinct wail of infancy coming. No, there was no broom menacing his head. He was re-assured, and, drawing up his nostrils, he said,

‘I feel a smell of cheese,’ and shivered.

At that moment somebody entered the shop from without, and Thorburn went out, weighed a powder, bottled some liquid, and came back to his surgery.

‘I got a shilling this time,’ he said, looking at

the contortionist. 'Snake,' he added, 'the drawings o' this business, will be enormous.'

'Will they?' said the Snake, in a hollow way.

'Enormous; and I'm doing it, Snake, on a Jersey degree.'

'What's that?'

'A degree a little Dutchman sent me for five pounds. It's delicious! Here, under the nose of a University that has kept me knocking at its examination-room doors for eight mortal years and wouldn't let me pass—here I am better off than any of 'em. Their carriages, Snake—their carriages take the gilt off their gingerbread; but I've got my gingerbread and my gilt all to myself.'

'I feel a smell of toasted cheese,' said the Snake, more decidedly than before; to which the adviser replied,

'It isn't cheese you want now, Snake; its something out of a bottle. Ah, if you had let that bottle alone, Snake, you might have been breaking

your back for ten pounds a week in Hengler's Circus. It's a great come-down from the circus to the penny gaff and the travelling-booth.'

The Snake broke himself in two, dislocated his left arm, and stared stolidly at the LL.D., with an allusive sniff at the vanished cheese.

'Yes, it's a come-down,' he wheezed. 'Haven't you got a job for me among the doctors? Don't any of 'em want to buy me in advance? I'll sell myself cheap. I'm not proud about my remains. If they wants to study joints on me, I'm open to an engagement.'

'There's nobody would buy you, Snake. They know you by heart already. Besides, there's nothing so very remarkable about you. It's only that your ligaments are like indiarubber, with continual stretching. If I had begun young I could have done it myself.'

'I'm the only contortionist,' said the Snake, as decidedly as his huskiness would allow him.

‘There’s nobody like me. There never will be nobody like me again. You had toasted cheese to your supper.’

‘I wish you wouldn’t allude to that precious bit o’ cheese so often,’ said the LL.D. ‘It makes me melancholy.’

‘I was thinking that I hadn’t had any meat all day,’ said the Snake.

‘Haven’t you now?’ asked the doctor, with a perfectly pitiless voice. ‘Now, I don’t believe in giving anything for nothing. I’m establishing a young business, and I want all my capital; and I do very fair by you when I give you five shillings a week hush money, as your share of what I get from Spens. I can’t expect, of course, that Spens will always be as green as he is. He’s not going to go on for ever paying two pounds a week because he stuffed your mouth with a towel. No; that wouldn’t be human nature. Some day he’ll get up in his chair and he’ll say, ‘Hang this dead man,

and his widow and his orphans!’ He’ll say that, and then he’ll repudiate the debt. That’s what he’ll do. We’ll never get a sixpence more out of him when that day comes.’

‘When will it come?’ asked the Snake, with an accent of melancholy, as of one who saw an end to his wages.

‘Sooner or later. Later rather than sooner, if you know how to behave yourself. Take you note that the practical joke I played that afternoon in the hospital, when all the surgeons were gone, by putting you on the waiting-room table and calling in the house-surgeon to feel your pulse—it’s a splendid trick, that of yours, to keep your pulse in your stomach and to stop the breathing of your heart—needn’t be found out for years, nor until the house-surgeon comes home from India, if you don’t betray us. The house-surgeon won’t be likely to show how he was done; not he. Ho! ho! ho: he won’t peach. And, in the meantime, Spens

is paying away for the orphans he never made, and the widow who doesn't exist, and the dead man who is still alive and kicking. Don't kick me, though,' he called out, as the Snake made complicated dislocations of all his parts at once. 'I promise you your wages if you do your work properly, for Spens is a funny youth, all moonshine and superstition, with a nervous system nicely adapted to seeing ghosts and such-like objects. We'll keep it up on him judiciously. It's a sure income. And now, Snake, if you want some toasted cheese at my fireside, you will walk up the High-Street distributing these business cards. Don't drop them into an area or throw them in a handful into the street, but give them, one by one, to the people you meet, who will take them from you. Shop—yes, coming.'

He went out and made another shilling and came back again.

'And Snake, don't post them at the General Post

Office in a bunch, though I don't deny that the staff might be the better of perusing my business card. It's a beauty, isn't it ?'

The Snake had never been taught to read, however, but he thought that, as small posters went, Roger's handbills would do very well.

'Ain't I to have the cheese first of all ?'

'No; but you can have some tamarind water, and here's a bit of liquorice-stick to chew at your work. That'll warm the cockles of your heart on the way up the High-Street; That'll keep the wind and the rain and the hail out of your system. Now, don't let me see you back here for an hour at least. It'll take you all that time to distribute.'

The Snake swallowed his tamarind water and went out into the street, chewing his liquorice-stick.

When he had gone, Mrs Roger Thorburn put her head in at her husband's door, and asked,

'How's business, Roger ?'

Roger was, apparently, quite satisfied, for he hit

his trousers' pocket and the sound which proceeded from it was silvery to a degree.

'Has Mr Spens paid his money this week, Roger?'

'Not yet. It should be in to-morrow, or I'll put Snake on his scent. Spens is a fool of a fellow, always looking out for picturesque bits, as he calls them, in the moonlight, and that sort of thing. I'll make Snake fetch him on one of these occasions. It's the only work Snake does for his money. Hang him! five shillings a week out of two pounds! I must put on the screw, and see if Spens can't come down with some more dust.'

Mrs Thorburn, arrayed in a tattered skirt, gave Roger a look of affectionate encouragement, put out her foot to check the entrance of a child who was sucking the sweet end of a pestle, gently closed the baize door, and trailed her slippers in a slovenly style through the passage where the wailing came from.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTIE'S SUPPER

It is easy for a young fellow to make a college session useless. Haco having broken down in his first examination paper, determined to do no more that year by way of competition. He would, of course, read and take notes of lectures, but to put himself into competition with men who had stood the fire of the first examination was out of the question. He knew his father would expect to see him, at least, as high on the lists as he had been at school. He looked forward

to what his father would say to him with a throbbing heart; still, he gave up the pursuit of the bronze medal, and ranged himself for the remainder of the session as a spectator who sat taking notes.

Having made up his mind to stop competing, he said to himself,

'After all, the first session doesn't matter. This summer I will compete for and get the medal in botany. I don't see any fellow in the anatomy class likely to get it; or, at least, any fellow who mightn't be beat with hard work.'

Accordingly he contented himself with his work in the hospital at which there was no examination, and, though he never became very skilful in the wards, he was a strong ally to Lady Mary, bringing in every third day magnificent bouquets, which had been made up at Binkie and sent over for distribution; giving little readings for the benefit of the convalescents, and otherwise

helping, without much advancing his own studies.

It relieved the strain of his remorse, however, to throw himself into the work of the ward—remorse for his abandonment of the examinations, for his use of the chloroform towel, for the amount of debt he was beginning to drift into without being able to avoid it.

‘You’ve never been up in my rooms,’ said Christie to him one day, after the Christmas holidays had dragged out their weary length. They were weary to Haco, because he had not known what to do with them exactly. The theatres were all given over to pantomime, and he liked that less than drama. The concerts were all devoted to the singing of Scotch songs, and though he liked that well enough, he found enough to be as good as a feast.

‘Not yet, Christie.’

‘Come up, then, on Friday night. I’m going

to give a supper. You are the only medical student. There is to be a lawyer, some theologians, and one artist. You will like to meet the artist, because he is such a humorous fellow — too humorous, some people think him; but he's a splendid painter, and people forgive a good deal for that.'

'I shall be very glad to come,' said Haco, who had already been with Christie to Professor Stewart's, and found him a most agreeable companion to go about with. He carried his honours so modestly. Though he had five medals in a cabinet, all taken by his own industry, no one could have known it on him. He never alluded to them; he never gave himself airs because he thought people knew how clever he had been in his classes. He was just like any other body who had not taken medals. Indeed, he was frequently taken for nobody at all; and on these occasions, it was only when matters of

fact came up for discussion that he was able to show that he was somebody ; for, in conversation, if anybody, for example, mixed up the daughters of Jove, and said that Clotho was by Dione, and Venus by Proserpine, and such like, Christie was down upon him at once, attributing the right daughters to the right mothers.

On the Friday night, when Haco went to his rooms (he lived in a street in Stockbridge), nobody had arrived.

Christie received him rather nervously when he went into his bedroom with him to see him wash his hands.

‘I haven’t done anything of this sort before. It is my first supper I think we fellows ought to see more of each other, you know. Father says it’s awfully different at Oxford, where he studied, and where I’m going when I get my M.A. There fellows get to know each other, and really enjoy a little social life. We are awfully far

behind in Edinburgh. Nobody knows any other body at college, and the professors are rather stickish; don't you think so? With the exception of Tea-party Cawdor, who really means well, and Professor Stewart, who runs about after every student on the sick-list, there isn't a man among them who makes a try for a little social life.'

'You talk awfully like an old fellow, Christie.'

'Well, I'm not a chicken now, Haco. I'm one-and-twenty years of age. You're not so very young, either. Eighteen, aren't you? Of course I've had a good deal more experience than you; but I don't see why, at your age, you shouldn't have ideas about things as well as me. All the other fellows who are coming have views. Tree, the artist, gives me a little anxiety. I hope he'll come sober, and not do anything outrageous, as he sometimes does. I don't want to offend my landlady. She's what they call a respectable widow woman, and wouldn't like Tree to be too

outrageous. Ah! here is somebody coming. It's one of the theologians. It's Hogg. How d'ye do, Hogg? This is Spens—Sir Thomas Spens' son. I've told you about him.'

Hogg was a small man, of an unwieldly habit of body, snub-nosed, wearing spectacles. There was an unctuous roll about his voice as he held out his hand to Haco, and said,

'Sir Thomas Spens is a man for whom I have a very great regard. I look upon him as perhaps the greatest surgeon we have had since Paley—no, not Paley, some other great man whose name has escaped me. It gives me great pleasure to be introduced to a son of Sir Thomas Spens.'

Haco did not know what to make of the little speech; it was formal, and smacked so much of the pulpit. He was considering how to answer him, when a second theologian made his appearance. He had already graduated, and was attending a theological college. His chief

peculiarity was a large red nose and a loud, large voice, which filled the room.

“A little for thy stomach's sake” — see Timothy,’ said the new arrival, divesting himself of his coat and reaching out his hand to a caraffe and a bottle.

‘I left that out for Tree,’ said Christie. Help yourself, Watson. I didn't know you cared for it. Hogg, will you have some? It's old Scotch whisky.’

‘A very little of it makes my head spin and my tongue wag,’ said Hogg.

‘Then don't have it,’ remarked Watson, emptying a glass and smacking his lips. ‘I am of opinion,’ he went on, as if he were addressing a congregation of three thousand people, ‘I am of opinion that Timothy would not have sanctioned the taking of Scotch whisky by any person whose tongue it affected and whose intellect it clouded, not that you are sorely burdened by the latter

as yet, Mr Hogg; but you are younger than me and a little intellect may come.'

'I wish Tree would put in an appearance,' said Christie, uneasily, looking at his watch; 'he's a most unreliable man. He promised faithfully to be here at the hour.'

At that moment the voice of the landlady was heard exclaiming in the passage,

'Oh, Mr Tree, you shouldn't! Now, you mustn't, I really will not! Oh, Mr Tree!'

'Confound him!' said Christie, in a whisper. 'Tree's kissing her behind the door.'

But Tree came in with a look of the most unembarrassed innocence, arrayed in a Turkish caftan and accoutrements.

'I've been giving a sitting, in character, to Thingumbob. I came on without changing. How d'ye do?'

'You've been keeping up the character behind the door, Tree. I heard you. This is the Rev.—or

very nearly the Rev.—Mr Watson. This is not quite so near Rev. Mr Hogg. This is Haco Spens, Sir Thomas' son. This is a merchant from Leith who hasn't finished his apprenticeship yet. This is a lawyer who—— I say, Tree, don't take so much of that stuff; it'll make you play one of your practical jokes.'

'Get out,' said Tree, laying down a tumbler, and giving a long sigh of satisfaction. 'Well,' he remarked, looking round the group, who stood in various attitudes about the hearthrug, 'there isn't any of you I'd like to put into a picture except this chap.'

'Who do you say he is?'

'Spens.'

'Spens?' Very well, Spens, my studio's on the Mound. I get a fine free light up there, and I'm suspended, like Mahomet's coffin between the two spheres. You come and see my studio, and I'll put you into a bit of canvas. Mind you, two or three

inches o' my canvas are worth a pocketful of sovereigns.'

Haco had painted a little at Dreghorn, and thought he knew something about art. He told Tree that he would see him in his studio to-morrow.

'Don't be so literal as that,' said Tree, advancing to the window and stealthily opening it. 'Come in the middle o' next week, and bring your sister with you.'

'I haven't got one,' said Haco.

'That's a pity for posterity,' replied Tree. 'By Jove!' he added, 'they're there yet;' and making a sudden dart into Christie's bedroom, he returned as suddenly with his ewer. 'Gardy loo!' he thundered into the street; and two faces from beneath two top-hats looked up in good time to receive the entire contents of the dish. Tree drew in his head, deposited the ewer on the floor, and capered round the room as if he belonged to a ballet. If at

the moment he could have sat to himself, he might have done for Beneficence smiling upon a good action.

Mr Watson, however, was horrified.

'I beg of you to remember,' he said, in a most solemn voice, 'that only last Sabbath I officiated in the pulpit of Mutton-Hole, and if it was to go forth that I had been concerned in so reckless an action, my spiritual and material prosperity might be very substantially damaged.'

'Right between the eyes, by Jove!' said Tree running on tiptoe to peer from the side of the blind at the drenched ones, who had gone into the middle of the street to try and discover the window from which the flood had descended.

'Who was it, Tree?' asked Christie, anxious to come between the theologian and the artist, and afraid at the same time that something serious might happen.

'An old Academy friend of mine and the

neighbouring doctor,' said Tree. 'I owed them both a grudge, and I believe, my reverend friend, it's a dispens-a-ation. It's like the fellow saying, "Oh that mine enemy would write a book!" Here have I been crying out, "Oh that Varnish would stand under a window and give me a chance!" And here he turns up his face and gets it.'

The landlady laid the supper right off. It was a very substantial feast, spread with game of various kinds from Christie's father's place in Forfar. There was plenty of old Edinburgh ale, some of Haco's wine which had not been 'changed at nuss,' and spirits for those who wanted it.

'It's a game supper,' said the merchant from Leith, aiming at a pun.

'We're members of the *harestocracy* to-night,' said the very nearly Rev. Mr Hogg.

'It's a *grouse* absurdity to pun upon it,' said Tree.

Haco tried all his might to make one, but it was

no use. He didn't see his way, nor did Christie, who was carving the hare abominably, while Tree was doing the grouse like an expert.

'There's nothing else coming,' said Christie.

'You see your supper before ye,' said Mr Watson, licking his lips with joyful anticipation, and striving to forget the incident of the ewer.

Encouraged by the absence of any consequences from the antic of Tree, the Rev. Mr Watson began to talk about his Sunday's discourse at Mutton-Hole.

'You are aware, Mr Tree, that I am not yet a licentiate of the Church, so that preaching a sermon is rather an event in my career. It's the fifteenth time I've read the same sermon, and I do it with magnificent effect now. But it's very aggravating to see the sleepers. Would ye believe it, Mr Tree, I've made twenty-one pounds three and ninepence out of that discourse?'

'It's a hanged shame, then,' said Tree, with his

mouth full of grouse, and his ears inclined to the window. 'I never heard a sermon that was worth sixpence. Don't begin to preach it here. I say, Varnish is kicking up a "waps" in the street.'

Everybody laid down a fork or knife and listened, and a voice in the street was heard exclaiming,

'I suspect that window, policeman—that one; those two windows where the lights are, and where the sound of the voices was coming a little ago.'

Mr Watson grew pale in the face, and turning to Christie, exclaimed,

'I had no hand in this affair, you will recollect. If the policemen are brought up here, I will feel it to be my duty to point out the individual who perpetrated the outrage.'

'Will ye?' said Tree. 'I'll have a slice o' your hare now, Christie. The smell o' that hare reminds me that I was once painting at the lodge-gate of Lord Rowan—you know Lord Rowan's, over the

hill from your father's; I was a guest of his lordship's, if you please. Sir Little Acorn, he came swinging up in his dog-cart, and no man behind him. He sees me doing nothing, as he believes, and looks down and says, "I say, my good fellow, will you be good enough to open that gate for me?" "I will," says I, touching my hat. And he put his thumb and finger into his pocket and threw down a sixpence. An hour after I met him at dinner. He looked blue. That was at Lord Rowan's, you will remember. And talking of Rowan, he has a glass eye. Old Spens put a glass eye in him, and he declares he sees better with it than the other one. Wonderful fellow, old Spens.'

'I must introduce you to my father some time or other,' said Haco, proud of his parentage, and about to describe some amazing things he had done before he took to moles, when a great thundering at the door commenced.

Tree and Spens rushed out of the room.

Christie rose and bade his guests be seated, as if nothing had occurred.

The knocking went on, and Tree prompting her, the landlady demanded, in a tearful voice, who was there.

‘An assault has been committed from your windows,’ said some one outside.

‘It’s a policeman,’ whispered the landlady, wringing her hands. ‘Oh, Mr Tree, will ye never be done wi’ your pranks?’

‘I know his voice,’ whispered Haco.

‘You do? Influence at court, by Jove! In luck again. Let the bobby in.’

‘One of you,’ continued Tree, in an exact imitation of the landlady’s voice, ‘may come in. But I’m a decent householder, and will not have my house roughly broken into. One of you at a time—only one. Spens, when your friend the bobby comes in, take him into that room and give him

half-a-crown. Here's a pantry with a window opening on to the passage outside. Lend me your family umbrella. Ah, here it is.'

Tree disappeared; the landlady opened the door; the policeman, baton in hand, came in, and was received by Haco. It was the man who lived at Sandy Baxter's. The wet Academician tried to follow him, but was promptly shut out, and while Haco, leading the policeman into another room had a quiet chat with him, Tree, at his hidden window, belaboured his enemy in the passage with the knotted handle of the umbrella. He came out radiant, and, seeing the policeman, said,

'Oh, you know what to do. It was all a joke. He didn't mean it. Don't take him to the station, you know. He's a big fool; but I know he won't do it again.'

Whereupon the policeman was led into Christie's supper-room. The Rev Mr Watson, agitated and striving to be calm, was pointed out to him.

'It's no use, my dear sir, making any objections,' said Tree. 'Bobby, remove him from the room.'

When he had been removed, Tree sat down, and wiping his brow, said,

'Now, Christie, let's make a night of it.'

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE SESSION

HACO went up and saw Tree's studio, and made so many appropriate remarks about the beauties of Tree's pictures, that the artist came greatly to like him.

'With your views,' he said, 'what makes you follow drugs? Judging from the look of you, you can do either of three things well. You can sing a song; you can paint a picture; you can write a poem. In any of the three cases, if you do it well, you are a benefactor of your species. But if, as

you say, you have no enthusiasm for stinks, you will become a charlatan of the deepest dye if you pursue them.'

'I didn't think you had such serious views,' said Haco, who, remembering the incidents of the supper, thought of Tree as more of a buffoon than anything else.

'You didn't think! Look into these portfolios; look round these easels; study these sketches and pictures, and judge for yourself if my life's blood isn't in them. And if I choose to amuse myself when my work's done, the world may go hang in its opinion of me and my character.'

Sing a song, paint a picture, write a poem—which should it be? Haco had been to the opera, and thought he would like to be a great operatic singer; he had seen Tree's pictures, and thought he would like to be Tree with a difference; he read from all the English poets, and with the exception of Swift and one or two others, he wished that he

might have been any of them. He went on dreaming, in fact ; and the end of the session came. The only work he had faithfully done was attending at the wards, and that, it is to be feared, was rather because he knew Lady Mary was there than because he liked the work.

It was on one of the last days, while he was waiting with Lady Mary in the ward, before he went to the operating theatre, that she said to him,

‘Haco, have you got any medals?’

‘Oh, no. I don’t much believe in them: in fact I haven’t competed. One doesn’t need to stand in class lists to get one’s degree.’

She looked at him with a sigh of disappointment.

‘Ah, if I had been allowed to compete, I should have cared to stand in the lists,’ she said.

‘Should you?’

‘Yes; one is never wrong to race with other people, when the goal is recognized by proper

authority. It is conceited, Haco, to stand aside and think it doesn't matter, as if you were a being to whom different laws of life applied. Next session you must compete. I am afraid you have not worked so hard as you ought to have done.'

Haco felt the rebuke keenly. He wore so down-cast an expression, as he stood by the fireplace, that Lady Mary added,

'I take quite a personal interest in your success. You must understand that. I should have been grateful to you if you had done well.'

'You are lecturing me.'

'No; but remember your father's splendid reputation, and that so much is expected of you. You are expected to be his successor to more than the—Binkie Manor and the rest of it.'

'For your sake, I shall try to like the profession,' said Haco, who felt a strange throbbing at his heart, as he looked into the wistful eyes of Lady Mary.

‘For their sake,’ she replied, pointing round at the beds and the little sufferers who were lying in them.

Yes,’ said Haco, going out to the operating theatre, when Mrs Blake came in to consult with her assistant.

The operating theatre, was down stairs—a lofty apartment, with a high glass dome, and benches rising to the roof, which commanded a view of the central floor and table where the surgeons worked.

The first person Haco saw was Sandy Baxter, leaning his chin on a bench and staring down upon the doctors.

‘You have nothing from your ward to-day?’ asked Sandy.

‘No; Dale is giving a man a new nose, after Dr John has tried his hand upon a knee joint. It’s Dr John’s first public operation. I don’t think he will do it very well. I know I heard Crum call him a muff.’

Presently the benches filled up with men having note-books; a sound of heavy footsteps was heard outside, and a man in a basket was carried in by four ward-dressers. He was lifted out and placed upon a table, and two dressers stood pumping spray in the neighbourhood of the table, while two others, with bottle of chloroform and towel, urged the patient into a sleep. He soon fell over, though he continued to make noisy ejaculations from time to time; and Dr John presently rose, with his right arm bared at the wrist, and a bit of gleaming steel in his hand. There were at least half-a-dozen surgeons sitting round about, with operations of their own to attend to after his was done. They soon began to show signs of impatience, rapidly snatching out their watches and looking at them as Dr John's movements seemed too slow: for he took a long time to narrate to the benches the 'history' of the case, and how it came about that the knee-joint required excising. At last the crucial

moment came: the dressers pumped the spray deftly; the men with the towel leant their heads close to the head of the patient; the men who had carried him down in the basket kept him from moving with their hands on his arms. Haco never looked at these moments. He had never seen an operation yet in its entirety; but Sandy Baxter was all eyes. Nothing escaped him; he bared his own arm sympathetically at the wrist along with Dr John. His eyes gleamed as he looked down the theatre. Then Dr John, having made an incision, looking up, with a blush mantling his face remarked, in a muffled and disappointed voice,

‘After all, gentlemen, it’s only a cyst. I have been a little out in my diagnosis. There is practically nothing the matter with the man.’

The surgeons who were waiting looked amused, perhaps a little triumphant, and the healthy patient was slapped back to consciousness again and carried up stairs.

‘Poor soul! he’ll be glad to find his leg on,’ said Haco, as he moved out from behind the theatre with Sandy Baxter.

‘This is our last day at the extra-mural,’ said Sandy. ‘They are giving out the prizes. Have you time, Spens, to come and hear the valedictories?’

‘Our session is practically at an end too,’ replied Haco. ‘Yes, I’ll go round with you.’

The sergeant was at the door of the medical school as they entered. He saluted Sandy, with a look of grave respect, and Haco being introduced to him as a son of Sir Thomas Spens, he bowed low and ushered the lads into a lecture-room. The platform was already filled with the professors’ wives; a few elderly gentlemen who had helped the doctors to purchase the house occupied the benches, and as Sandy came in he received a look of cordial congratulation from everybody. Haco

wished that he had earned people's cordiality in the same way.

Then the full medical staff came in, and addressed the college—that is, Sandy.

‘I have much pleasure,’ said the professor of anatomy, ‘in saying that Alexander Baxter, though he has been our only student, has been as good as a class in himself. He has earned the silver medal, which a special endowment enables me to present to him on this occasion. It is true that one swallow does not make a summer; but, regarding Mr Baxter as a swallow, I think we may say that he is the good augury for a very warm summer of coming students.’

A rumbling of feet, amid which Sandy went back to his seat with his silver medal in his hand.

‘I have to say,’ remarked the professor of chemistry, ‘that in all my experience of teaching I have had no pupil who promised so well as Alexander Baxter. He has made the session,

which has not been otherwise remunerative, one of pleasure and profit. Take, Alexander Baxter, this silver medal, which a special endowment enables me to give you. You richly merit it for the work you have done.'

'I had no right to suppose,' said the professor of physiology, 'that in his first year of class-work Alexander Baxter would attend my lectures. It is not in the usual course. But his appetite is omnivorous. I have pleasure in handing him the silver medal for which he has worked.'

Haco looked into each medal as Sandy brought it to the benches, and devoutly wished he were carrying them home to the Manor. Heavens! how his father would have softened towards him! But were there no other sessions before him to retrieve himself in?

When the speeches were over, the elderly gentlemen came down and shook hands with Sandy. They wished him a prosperous career. They told

him that he had exceptional advantages. They said, if he went on as he had begun, he would soon go to the top of the tree. Everybody seemed to wish well to Sandy, and Haco, walking out with him into the street, felt a little forlorn.

CHAPTER XVI

HOME

BETWEEN the winter and summer session a month intervened, and Haco had to go home. Home! The word had a pleasant significance for scores and scores of the lads who had been running up and down the steps of the University all winter. Some of them went west to the mountains, and thence to a straw-thatch on the edge of a moor, and told their winter's experience at a hearth of peat to a crowd of fishermen. Some of them went east to the little towns on the coast, and told the local lawyer,

doctor, or minister all that was doing under the foot of the castle rock since their day, and enjoyed their elevation of manhood for the first, and, perhaps, for the last time. For six long months had they not been at the tender mercies of eating-houses and landladies, and lived as strangers in a strange land? But at the summer's end were there not mothers' arms open for them, and sisters' kisses and brothers' gibes, and all the kindly excitement of returning with pale faces, which created anxiety and of having books forcibly removed, in case they would prolong their devotions to them too much and become ill?

Haco did not feel any glow of delight about his prospect of home-coming. He did not know how he could ever approach his father. True, his father might still be so deep in the problem of the eyesight of moles that he would not trouble with questioning him much; but then he might question him a great deal, in which case he would have to

produce some portentous booksellers' accounts, and let him know that for a month he had not paid Mrs Ramsay any board, that he had not got into the class lists, and that he had killed a man. It was a poor sum total to a session, particularly when Sandy Baxter's achievements were taken into account—Sandy, with his three medals and his original ten pound saved and taken home for presentation to his mother. Devoutly he wished he were the son of the griever the afternoon he reached Binkie Manor. His father was out when he went in, and it seemed to him as if the temporary respite was the only happiness awaiting him. The housekeeper met him in the hall, and, holding up her hands, exclaimed,

'Oh, Mr Haco, you are looking like a ghost!'

'Am I?' said Haco, as Sir Thomas' man, a veteran who believed himself to be a surgeon through long contiguity with the profession, added,

'Mr Haco, you've been overdoing it. Your

father has ridden over to Farmline. He didn't expect you so soon.'

'I'm all right, thank you,' said Haco, miserably.

More and more he began to feel as if he were a culprit about to come up before the bar of an inflexible judge. Then he strolled away to the room of his boyhood, and, standing at the window, looked out on the blue sea.

Sir Thomas' man had followed him with some of his luggage.

'How are you going to like it, Mr Haco?' he asked, having unstrapped a portmanteau.

'Like what, Isaac?'

'The profession. Is it to your mind?'

'Oh, yes; it's well enough, Isaac. I haven't quite got used to it yet. No, thank you, there isn't anything more you can do for me just now.'

He dressed himself, and presently went round a corridor to the room which had been his mother's. When his mother died he had been too young to

contempt for the operator. But here was the splint put on to perfection. He tied up his mare to a gate, went into the field, looked at the fore-leg of the pony, and, laying it down, murmured,

‘I might have done it myself! It’s Haco. I couldn’t have believed it. He’s a born surgeon. My own splint!’

For the first time in his recollection, probably, he experienced a slight sensation of exultation in thinking of his son. After all, Haco was not his mother’s son; he was his, Sir Thomas Spens’ son, having the trick of his fingers and the judgment of his brain.

The grievance was perplexed. He had never told Sir Thomas that his son had gone to Edinburgh to study medicine. He did not tell him that he had returned from the extra-mural with three silver medals. He had even intercepted his wife, who, arrayed in her best, was going down to the manor

to call upon the housekeeper to show the first fruits of her son's genius.

‘Nothing of the sort,’ said the grieve. ‘What! stir up envy and jealousy, and make mischief! Mr Haco has got nothing.’

He supposed that it was likely Sir Thomas must come to know some time that his son was studying medicine, and studying it to magnificent purpose; but even now, when the surgeon was pointing out a splint which Sandy had made and applied, attributing it to Haco, he thought that it was not for him, but for the chapter of accidents, to reveal the circumstance. Sir Thomas was not making too much of the accident to the pony. The grieve knew that if he trotted out his boy and his achievements he would have a bad five minutes, and he had no mind to hear the baronet's blasphemy as he strode indignantly out of the field; for the illustrious surgeon could sometimes swear.

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'It's a wonderful application,' said the grieve, going round the pony's head, and, under the light supplied him by the baronet's talk, beginning to see his own son as something of a paragon.

'Take the pony home, Baxter; let him have a soft bedding, weak feeding; and not a word more about that splint. The hand that applied that splint will cure the pony. Tell your wife to send a couple of dozen of eggs to that worthless wretch on the road over to Farmlin—the hedger who cut his own leg; and if Sutter's boy calls for milk, he's to have a couple of quarts every morning for the next six weeks gratis.'

And Sir Thomas, mounting at the gate, rode to Binkie Manor. Haco met his father at dinner. He was exquisitely nervous. But the feeling wore off at once, for his father met him with a cordiality which, if it left Haco with a poignant regret that he had not made more of the session, made him also very glad in a new experience. He had

never had his hand shaken by his father as he had it now. Isaac waited at table, and was profoundly interested in the son's return. He had a hundred questions which he would have liked to put to the lad, and he wondered how the surgeon could postpone asking them through two entire courses.

'On the whole, then, Haco, what branch of your work do you seem to like best?' asked Sir Thomas at dessert. 'Isaac, you can put down a '48. Now, bring it up as if it were a precious life that you might sacrifice by shaking. A '48, Haco, in honour of your return! I don't broach a '48 more than once or twice a year. Who had it last, Isaac? Ah, he's gone. I don't advise you to cultivate a fine taste for wine, my boy; you will want the use of your hands for many a useful year to come, so they must be steady, sure, firm, immovable. Many an operation have I seen bungled by a shaky hand. Why, there was Gillies,

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who smoked six hours a day, and who would have smoked at his operations if we had let him. Gillies' hand shook so that his blade made a sawing motion when he was making a clean stroke. Ah, Isaac, who last had that '48 ?'

'A foreign gentleman, sir, from Vienna.'

'To be sure—the great Viennese oculist. He had a '48. Said it reminded him of revolutions and earthquakes and commotions in general. I remember. Gently, Haco ; treat it gently. It's a noble vintage. How d'ye like it ?'

Haco tasted it, and didn't seem to see any difference between it and any other kind of wine. He said it was the noblest wine he had ever had at his lips.

'Yes, I think it is. Well, what branch of your work do you think you like best—chemistry, anatomy, or hospital work ?'

Haco paused, and, remembering Lady Mary, said

that, of all his classes, he greatly preferred the hospital.

‘Yes, yes—very good; but don’t overlook your anatomy. Surgery is based on anatomy. They hang together—they all hang together. Each science is but a different aspect of all knowledge—remember that—and the practical arts are only applied science. Eh? eh? You were makin some remark.’

‘No, it was nothing. I didn’t think of anything at the moment.’

Then, at that moment, the surgeon became exceedingly cunning in the expression of his face. He might have been a country lad saying, or about to say, ‘You don’t get over me,’ so expressive of extreme slyness were his eyes.

‘And, Haco, do you mean to tell me that Crum has so far abandoned his prejudices as to use the Spens splint?’

Haco had never heard of his father’s splint.

There were so many allusions to him in the wards that he got used to his name and forgot half of them.

‘The Spens splint!’ ejaculated Haco, wishing very much that he knew what it meant.

Sir Thomas drank some more ’48, and, to the surprise of his son, who had not heard him laugh half-a-dozen times in his life, he broke into a hearty fit of laughing.

‘My boy, go on as you are doing. I believe in independence of judgment and action. Take your own time. You will go over my head yet. Yes, yes, high over it. The Spens splint is enough for me. And now, for the next month, go and amuse yourself to your heart’s content, and don’t let me hear a word about medicine.’

CHAPTER XVII

INTERRUPTED LOVE-MAKING

HACO did not trouble his father with unnecessary remarks about his first session. He was surprised to find himself so easily let off. Not a word did his father say to him on the subject of his classes, having seen the splint. The splint was enough for Sir Thomas; he turned in upon his moles again, and though there was a visible softening of his manner to his son, and a heightened respect, it came out casually, and with no immediate allusion to what he had been studying. To Haco's discom-

fort, his father seemed quietly satisfied with him.

After his first experience of life in the metropolis, Binkie Manor became very pleasant for Haco. On the morning after his arrival he went all over the garden and let himself out upon the rocks, and, as the sun shone briskly down upon the shore and showed him everything at its most beautiful, he felt that it was an occasion for a poem. He had not written one all winter. He would try one now. He would put Lady Mary into it; nay, he would write it about Lady Mary. When Haco wrote verse, it was a sure sign that the burden of life was not pressing very heavily on him. He was as cheerful as one of the black-birds among the copses, as he took out his notebook and began inscribing a woeful ballad to the nursing sister. It surprised him, beyond measure, how swiftly the numbers came on him. The Lady Mary, gentle, tender, bending among her sick

infants, and administering consolation to them, seemed revealed to himself in his outpouring of affection to her. Why, he must be in love with her, and he had never known it. Harken! the poem done, and a big sigh heaved. Yes, surely that was love. What else could it be? He would send his verses to the Lady Mary, so that she should learn she had a lover, though she did not know his name.

‘Ah!’ sighed Haco again, ‘if she were but here on this strand, where the waves are kissing the pebbles, could I not tell her how much I love her?’

And he set off along the shore. He had not gone far before he saw Tibbie Baxter, gathering ‘flowers of constancy’ at the roots of the trees. He had not seen Tibbie since he had returned. He remembered her fragrant little letter, containing the enclosure of bluebells, and he could not help noticing how much she had changed since last he saw her. Tibbie gathered flowers very nicely,

not with a rude dash at the roots, bringing up handfuls of grass, but rather with a gentle solicitation to each flower to join her bunch, because it was better for it to be there than on the cold ground.

Haco thought her exquisitely pretty, winding out and in the roots of the trees, unseen by any one, engaged in filling her hand.

‘Tibbie, I am so glad to see you,’ he said, approaching, while she stooped. ‘I hope you are keeping well. I don’t know how you happened to get bluebells in winter, but, I assure you, on my mantelpiece in Edinburgh they looked beautiful—the handful you sent me.’

Tibbie raised herself from her task, let a becoming blush suffuse her face, and holding out her hand, exclaimed, with a little gesture,

‘Oh, Mr Haco! I didn’t expect to find you here.’

Perhaps she didn’t. She really looked so surprised that she may not have expected him. Anyhow, she seemed very glad to see him.

‘Why, Tibbie you are quite changed since I saw you last! What has happened to you?’

Tibbie’s dark eyes sparkled with pleasure as she looked at him, but she did not speak just at once. She looked down on the ground, and held her bluebells at her back.

‘You have become—why, you are a beautiful creature, Tibbie!’

‘Oh, no, indeed, then, and I’m not, Mr Haco!’ said Tibbie, looking round with a startled gesture.

‘But I tell you you are, Tibbie. You’re like Sandy—you’ve changed all of a sudden; and from being—not plain you know—you were never plain, but different—you have become quite a beauty! You must allow me to judge, coming back from the metropolis, where I have seen so many types of beauty. I have been acting with Lady Mary Hay all winter, who is the most exquisitely beautiful woman on earth; and comparing you even with Lady Mary, Tibbie, you are quite a beauty.’

Tibbie did not seem to care much about the comparison, for she said, with a little curtsey,

‘I’m only interrupting you, Mr Haco. I come here for the flowers because they grow to a deeper blue and a redder red than higher up, where the wind is too strong for them. I’m going away to the Mains now.’

‘Oh, wait a minute, Tibbie,’ said Haco. ‘I should awfully like you to hear my poem on Lady Mary Hay. It won’t be read to another soul but you. You are the first and last before it is posted and sent off to Lady Mary. And she doesn’t know who it’s coming from.’

Haco took out his note-book, and, in a melodious voice, read his poem to Tibbie, who, nursing her flowers, listened with downcast lids. She did not attempt to criticise it, though Haco read her the last two verses twice over. He thought them exceptionally nice, and he expected Tibbie to say something.

‘Now, if your lover had written these verses to you, Tibbie, would you have thought them nice? Would you have valued them? Would they have’——

‘I have no lover,’ said Tibbie, with a sigh, as they ascended a path among the roots of the trees, where the ferns were beginning to sprout. ‘I think them very beautiful, Mr Haco.’

‘Ah, I’m glad you like them, Tibbie. Let me give you a hand up this steep bit. There, hold on, and I will pull you up till we get on to the grass walk behind the trees, looking on the fields. I haven’t been there since I returned.’

Tibbie, clutching her flowers in one hand, and giving her other hand to Haco, felt herself borne up among the trees, till they had ascended the steep path to the very top.

‘It’s very steep,’ said Tibbie, her breath coming and going, as she stood to recover it.

‘Yes; but could you imagine anything nicer than

the view down the copse, with the waves lapping the beach? It makes me wild with delight to look at it.'

'I suppose you were very happy in Edinburgh?' said Tibbie, trying to unfasten a padlock at a gate which led through the fields to Binkie Mains.

Haco's brow clouded, and he replied,

'I hope never to spend so miserable a six months in my life again. Has Sandy not told you that I was very miserable?'

'No; he only said you hadn't taken medals.'

'Oh, worse than that, Tibbie; much worse than that. Don't be in such a hurry to go away. I should like awfully to tell you all about it. It does a fellow good to get a little sympathy.'

'Did Lady Mary not sympathise with you?'

'Well, she's different; I didn't tell her.'

Tibbie's face brightened, and she stopped fingering the padlock as she looked up at Haco with sparkling eyes.

‘I am sure, if I could do or say anything to help you’——

‘Bless you, Tibbie, you couldn’t help me. My difficulties are a man’s difficulties, and you are but a girl. I’ll tell you how you could help me though’——And Haco, putting the palms, of his hands on each of Tibbie’s cheeks, drew her face towards himself and kissed her lips.

‘Mr Haco, you shouldn’t do that,’ said Tibbie, her eyes glowing and her cheeks aflame. ‘What would your beautiful Lady Mary Hay say to you if she knew?’

‘Oh, I didn’t think of that. Of course, when I say that I am in love with Lady Mary, it’s a sort of poetical license, you know.’

‘You shouldn’t take poetical licenses, Mr Haco,’ said Tibbie, looking at him mischievously, and without further resentment.

‘Why, Tibbie, I believe we are making love,’ said Haco, putting his arm about her waist.

'Hey!' shouted a rough voice; and Haco, dropping his arm, turned, and saw the grieve swinging along the green walk behind the trees. Tibbie trembled, and became pale with excitement. Haco had never seen the grieve's face wear such an expression; he looked mad with anger.

'You good-for-nothing, scoundrelly fellow!' exclaimed the grieve, coming down upon the pair; 'you were tryin' to pree her mou'. You needn't deny it, sir; I saw you wi' my own eyes.'

Haco had never been called a scoundrelly fellow in his life. He felt a little bewildered, as if he had been struck a blow in the face.

'You don't mean me?' he said, looking at the wrathful father.

'None o' your pretence, sir. I see through your double-facedness. I understand your mim manners. I saw you making an effort to pree my daughter's mou'. Od's sake, if I had my wull o' you, it's a stick you would get to your back. But I'll away

doon to the manor and tell your father. I'll let him know that you'll not be permitted with impunity to pree the mou' of Alexander Baxter's daughter.'

'You're forgetting yourself, Mr Baxter, to talk to me about using a stick.'

'Go home this moment! Go home to your mother!' cried the grieve, unfastening the gate and thrusting his daughter into the field.

Tibbie fled over the green uplands, the tears rushing down her cheeks.

'You can be very brutal when you like, Mr Baxter,' said Haco. 'If you hadn't been her father I should have thrashed you for your rough behaviour to her.'

'Od's sake, this is a pretty state o' matters! When did you take my daughter under your charge? It's some few years since that job devolved upon me; and, until the man who is to

marry the girl comes for her, that job remains mine, Mr Haco Spens.'

The vehemence of his wrath had begun to expend itself. He rapidly calmed down now.

'Well,' said Haco, 'I suppose you mean to tell my father?'

'It's what you deserve,' said the grieve. 'You ought to know, sir, with your upbringing, that it is not a gentlemanly thing to pree the mou' of a girl, an', maybe, break her heart and her mother's, and bring grief and trouble and pain upon all around; and it's not a thing that I will tolerate. But I have no intention of telling your father. I will be content to take your promise that you will never do such a thing again. Is it a promise?'

'Of course, I promise,' said Haco. 'But you take it awfully seriously. After all, what great harm was there in one kiss? Will you tell me that, Mr Baxter?'

Mr Baxter looked at him solemnly, without anger; all his anger had spent itself.

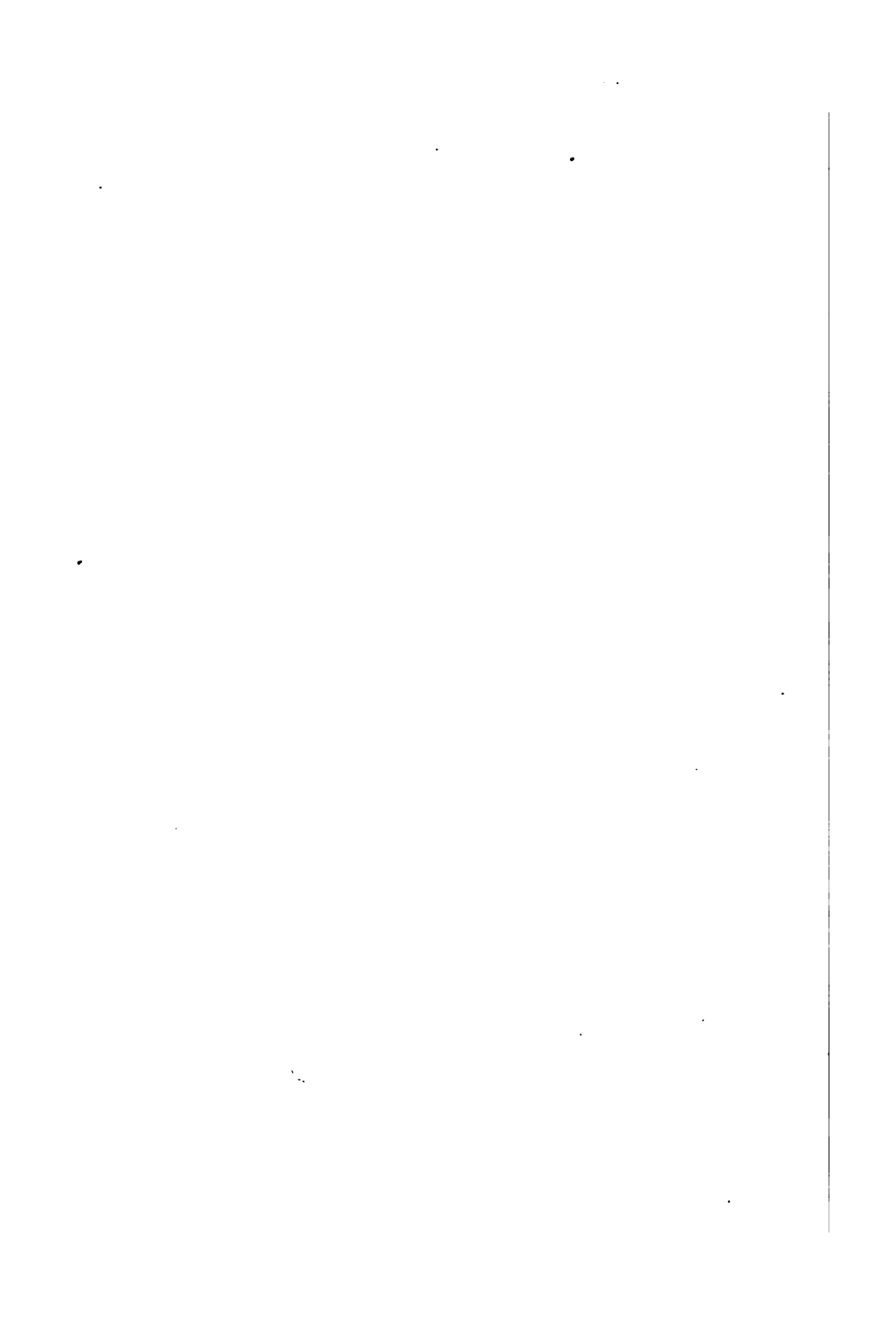
‘Your knowledge o’ life, young sir, is not as yet over deep. You need a little teaching—a little experience; and when that comes you’ll not think it’s such a light thing as you suppose. You that’s rich and high up, and always likely to be—you’ll not think it such a light thing to fill the head of a young girl with delusions.’

‘I didn’t think of it any more than that butterfly does among the petals of that flower.’

‘Very pretty, Mr Haco. But what do we know about the thochts of the flower? The butterfly’s gone, but the flower’s not the same flower. Now I have your word of honour?’

‘I promise you.’

END OF VOL I



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